

Eunice.



Letters of a Fatherly Friend to a
Young Christian Mother.

2 Tim. 1, 5.

Adapted from the German

of

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I.

DEAR EUNICE:—

May God bless you, dear Eunice, and may the Savior comfort you!

You are now a wife and a mother. What a blessed thing that is! Without any question whatever this is a vocation that is well-pleasing unto God. For God has instituted the estate of matrimony and ordained all that it comprises. Did not God create man “male and female”? Did not God bless them and say unto them: “Be fruitful and multiply”? Is it not He who ordained that man and wife should be “one flesh”? ¹⁾ — True, after the Fall God laid much pain and sorrow upon child-bearing, ²⁾ but that is not saying that God no longer regards matrimony a sacred estate upon which He delights to lay His richest blessings. No, while the earth continues, matrimony shall be a sacred and a blessed institution. ³⁾

Now, no doubt, you have tasted the pain and sorrow of it all. Did you think, at times, that God was angry with you? O Eunice, you are a beloved child of God through faith in Christ Jesus! ⁴⁾ When the pain and sorrow and fear of pregnancy and childbirth come upon you, God only wants you in full and childlike trust to fly to Him as to your dear heavenly Father, and to say to Him:—

O God of mercy, pity me!
Thou bidst me bring my grief to Thee.
Thine own beloved child am I,
Though hell and world and sin deery.

My Lord and God, Thou art my Stay,
In Thee am I content alway;
Thou art my Jesus, Savior, Friend,
My Comforter, world without end.

1) Gen, 1, 27, 28; 2, 24.

2) Gen. 3, 16.

3) Matt. 19, 4—6; Ps. 127, 3; Acts 17, 26.

4) Gal. 3, 26.

This cheers my heart and makes me bold;
In every storm to Thee I hold;
Thy Word shall light my paths again:
O God of mercy, hear! Amen.⁵⁾

Eunice, dear child of God, I implore you, beware of the evil spirit and of the ungodly talk that is current with increasing brazenness among unbelieving women, and has bewitched and seduced so many—alas!—who profess to be Christians.⁶⁾ I mean such talk as when a woman says: “I won’t have any children!” Or: “I am willing to have one or two, but that is enough. It is so troublesome to have them, and to raise them is a lot of trouble too. It costs too much to have children and to raise them, especially nowadays, when everything costs so much.” And they act accordingly, as you may well know. In various ways they prevent pregnancy. But it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.⁷⁾ Some, when they become aware of their pregnancy, get rid of it. *That is downright murder.* Such a wicked woman will say: “As long as it is not born, it is only a part of myself, and I have a right to do as I please with myself.” But those are vain words.⁸⁾ The old saying is true: It is better to raise ten than to have to answer for one.

Eunice, dear child of God, let God’s Holy Spirit lead you!⁹⁾ Let the Word of God be your guide.¹⁰⁾ God the Holy Spirit, in the Word of God, says that God bestows His *blessings* on child-bearing.¹¹⁾ “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His reward. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.”¹²⁾ Gladly accept the children your Father in heaven bestows upon you. Pray for every child you bear, yes, pray for it, that it may be the Lord’s child eternally. There is another old saying: The more children you have, the more you pray.

5) Ps. 18, 6.

6) Eph. 5, 6—11.

7) v. 12.

8) v. 6.

9) Ps. 143, 10.

10) Ps. 119, 11. 105.

11) Gen. 1, 28; Ps. 128, 3. 4.

12) Ps. 127, 3. 5.

May the good Spirit of God and His faithful Word rule your mind, my dear Eunice! You want to be saved, I am sure. Now, you shall be saved in child-bearing; child-bearing is the way in which God wants to lead you to salvation, if you continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety, not allowing the Evil Spirit and wicked talk to beguile you.¹³⁾

This is the prayer of

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

II.

DEAR EUNICE:—

The Savior says: "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."¹⁾ Thank God if these things have come to pass in your life. And, pray, remember two things. First, remember that your child is conceived and born in sin,²⁾ and by nature is therefore a child of God's wrath, even as others.³⁾ Furthermore, remember that your Savior is the Savior also of your child,⁴⁾ that He dearly loves your baby and wants it to be brought to Him that He might save it.⁵⁾ Therefore be sure to have your child *baptized* as soon as possible. For Baptism, as you know, is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. God there sheds upon your child abundantly His Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, its Savior, that, being justified by His grace, it might become an heir according to the hope of eternal life.⁶⁾ — And in choosing sponsors for your baby, let it be your earnest concern to find

13) 1 Tim. 2, 15.

1) John 16, 21.

3) Eph. 2, 3.

5) Mark 10, 13—16.

2) Ps. 51, 5.

4) 2 Cor. 5, 19.

6) Titus 3, 5—7.

such as are sincere Christians and not addicted to any false doctrine, some that will pray:—

Make it, Head, Thy member now;
Shepherd, take Thy lamb and feed it;
Prince of Peace, its peace be Thou;
Way of Life, to heaven lead it;
Vine, this branch may nothing sever,
Graft by faith in Thee forever.

Now into Thy heart we pour
Prayers that from our hearts proceeded;
Let our sighings heavenward soar,
Let our warm desires be heeded;
Write the name we now have given,
Write it in the book of heaven.7)

Ah, yes, the name! What name do you want your child to bear throughout life? In a sense, of course, there is not much in a name. Perhaps you have some near and dear relative after whom you want to name your baby. But, you know, some mothers will take a dictionary and pick out any odd name that appeals to their fancy, frequently without understanding what the name means. It may be of heathen origin, or otherwise an altogether foolish name. Don't you think that it is best to give your child a name that is suitable for a child of God?

And now your baby, the dear little child of God, is neatly tucked away in its little bed. Cease not to pray for it! The way before it through life may be long, and then, oh! so many dangers beset its path through this wilderness. "Way of Life, to heaven lead it!" Mark what I say: Pray regularly for your child as you stoop over its crib. Make that a practise from the very beginning. The little mite, of course, does not understand what you are doing, but its infant soul receives impressions slowly and by degrees and in an ever-increasing measure as its little body grows, even in the first year. And don't forget that the Holy Spirit dwells within its soul. Now if it regularly — let me say

every evening — sees you bending over it in prayer, surely in some incomprehensible way this will become imbedded in its little heart and take root there.

I know you will use good sense in feeding your child, and that you will keep it very clean. I can imagine that you are smiling at my solicitude. But many a mother makes a mistake here. Some will nurse their baby whenever it cries, and so its little stomach gets no rest whatever, and the child becomes fretful. And as for cleanliness, great importance indeed attaches to absolute regularity from earliest infancy in washing its little face and hands. Early habits cling to one through life. A child that has not been washed regularly when an infant will, later on, not attend to this regularly itself, and is apt to be slovenly all through life.

And may I add one more thing? Begin at once, through the first year, to train your child to be *obedient*. You will soon notice that it is wilful. If it does not get what it wants, it will cry. If you allow it to have its way, it will become more wilful and unruly as it grows up. Begin at once to teach your child that *your* will must rule. Be careful, however, that *your* will is right. In this way, by the grace of God, you will have a well-behaved child. As soon as it learns to speak, it will say, "Mama, may I?" And that is very good.

Surely you will not take these words amiss from

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

III.

DEAR EUNICE:

To-day I shall speak of the time when your child is about two or three years old.

Well, yes, I have begun to write, — but what shall I write? You understand my hesitancy. Children are so different. One matures so much sooner than the other, and one is so much brighter than the other; what I might say of one would therefore not fit the case of the other. So I will speak of an average child, one that is not exceptionally bright nor particularly dull.

This is the time when a child makes such noticeable progress both in speaking and in understanding what it hears people say; and now is the time for you to be mindful of a mother's highest calling. The Savior says: "Feed My lambs!"¹⁾ Your child is Jesus' lamb. Jesus entrusted it to your keeping. And you, *you* are to feed it, to nourish it with food for eternal life. In Baptism your child has been born again and has become a new creature. You are to feed that new creature within it. Without a doubt it is your earnest desire to do so.

But how will you go about it?

When at table, you and your husband bow your heads to say grace; teach your child to fold its little hands, too, and say, "Abba, Amen," and later on, "Abba, Father, Amen." Later in the day, perhaps at supper, when your husband and you have family worship,—for I surely hope you will not forego this blessing,—do it in the presence of your child. It does not understand what you read from the Bible—of course not—at that age, but it will become accustomed to waiting for that home worship. It will say, "Read, please!" "We haven't read yet." It will delight in the worship. And when you put your child into its little bed, fold its hands again and teach it to pray. Here is a little selection of prayers:—

Jesus, tender Savior,
Thou hast died for me;
Make me very thankful
In my heart to Thee!

Or:

Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me,
He is always, always near:
Whether good or ill betide me,
There is naught that I can fear.

Or:

Jesus, give the weary
Calm and sweet repose;
With Thy tenderest blessings
May my eyelids close.

1) John 21, 15.

Or: I'm sleepy now and wish to steep
 Tired eyes in blessed sleep.
 Father, let Thine eyes divine
 Watch o'er me where I recline.

If I've erred or sinned to-day,
Take, O God, my guilt away!
Jesus' merit and Thy grace
Doth all sin and guilt efface.

I must tell you a story. Many years ago I knew a very old man of noble family. He was a venerable old gentleman of fine ideals. But he was a Master Mason and refused to listen to anything from the Bible. When he was about to die, an old friend visited him. He was alone with him for two hours. When the friend had left, the old gentleman called his daughters and spoke thus: "My whole life has been wasted. But now I am going back to what my mother taught me when I was a little child." And then he folded his hands and prayed the little prayers of his early childhood. And so he died. Do you see the value of it?

You may teach your child to alter some favorite verse and to apply it more particularly to itself. For instance:—

Through the long night-watches
(Dear Savior) may Thine angels spread
Their white wings above me,
Watching (right) around my (little Robert's) bed.

And ere long your child may learn to say and sing:—

I fall asleep in Jesus' wounds,
There pardon for my sins abounds;
Yea, Jesus' blood and righteousness
My jewels are, my glorious dress,
Wherein before my God I stand
When I shall reach the heavenly land.

And never neglect to hold your child to strict obedience. When occasionally it has done something wrong, you must not fail to punish it somehow, perhaps by slapping its hands. And after such punishment, if the child is, as I am assuming,

about three years of age, teach it to understand the prayer I mentioned last. Suppose you go about it in this way: "Jesus" is your dear Savior. "Wounds" are something that bleeds and hurts awfully. The dear Savior Jesus had wounds and terrible hurts, and He suffered all this *for you*. Remember, you were bad just now. You see you have a wicked little heart, or you could not be bad. And with a wicked heart one cannot go to the beautiful heaven where the Savior wants you to go. That wicked heart brings you to an altogether different place, where there are very many things that hurt and pain. But your dear Savior wants you to go to heaven, and He had many wounds and suffered terrible hurts and pains *for you*, so He can take you there. In connection with this you might show your child some pictures that represent Jesus' suffering and resurrection and ascension, and explain them. Your child will be so glad to see them.

O Eunice, feed the lamb of Jesus; feed it soon!

God will bless you for this, and He will bless your child thereby.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

IV.

DEAR EUNICE: —

Let us say your child has now passed its third birthday, and it has had a birthday-cake trimmed with three lights. Now the time begins when more work, delightful work, awaits you. May God give you an eager heart for it!

Until now I have spoken of only one child. I shall continue to do so, for I wish to accompany that one child throughout its childhood years. But you must not imagine that I am supposing you to have but one child. From what I said in my first letter you noticed that I hope God has given you more children, which, indeed, implies more work. —

Now, then, when your child has had its third birthday, — what then? I mean, what are you then to feed Jesus' little lamb? Then begin, with the utmost simplicity, to tell your



child about God, how in the beginning, when as yet there was nothing at all, He made heaven and earth. To begin with, the best thing I think you can do is carefully to read the first two chapters of the Bible, and perhaps to have them lying before you for reference. Here you should add something about the beloved angels, who are in heaven, and who very swiftly come down to us on earth to guard over us and keep us.¹⁾ — Then tell your child of sin, into which Adam and Eve fell, and also of death, and that thus sin and death passed upon all men.²⁾ You will do well to treat the third chapter of Genesis just as you treated the first two. And explain that within the serpent there was the devil, an angel who had sinned and made very many other angels to sin with him.³⁾ And then you must not delay to tell of the *Savior*, that dear Friend of little children whom God promised to Adam and Eve as soon as they had fallen into sin.⁴⁾ And at this point I would advise you to get the smallest selection of Bible stories you can find, and follow the order given in the Bible, telling of Jesus' birth and childhood; then tell who Jesus is, true God and man,⁵⁾ and relate some of the miracles that Jesus did, how He healed the sick and raised the dead. Then tell of Jesus' suffering and death and resurrection and ascension. Do not fail to teach your child some of the beautiful Christmas hymns, such as "Silent Night, Holy Night," "Come Hither, Ye Children," "Beside a Manger Lowly," and others. And ever again let your child pray: "I fall asleep in Jesus' wounds" and: "Jesus, tender Savior," prayers I told you of in my last letter. And it would be a very nice thing indeed if you could bring your child to the point where it would freely speak to its beloved Savior from its heart, just as it speaks to you. For instance, it might say: "Dear Savior, I thank Thee for dying for me"; and: "Dear Savior, love me and always stay with me, and take me to heaven when I die"; and: "Dear Savior, bless Papa

1) Ps. 91, 11. 12.

2) Rom. 5, 12; Eph. 2, 3.

3) 2 Cor. 11, 3; Rev. 20, 2; 2 Pet. 2, 4; Jude 6.

4) Gen. 3, 15.

5) Rom. 9, 5; 1 John 5, 20.

and Mama"; and so on. You see, that will prevent a mere thoughtless reciting of its prayers. Teach it never to forget its parents and brothers and sisters in its prayers.

So your child will grow apace, will become four years old, and five. This makes me think of still another thing, of which I will write in another letter.

For to-day content yourself with this from

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

V.

DEAR EUNICE:—

Years ago,— for you know that by this time I am an old retired minister,— years ago I once came into the home of some young married people belonging to my congregation, and was asked to remain for supper, which I did. In fact, I must confess, if they had not invited me, I would have invited myself, for I was hungry, and it was too late for me to go home for supper. And I had a great and especial fondness for this young couple. I had confirmed both the husband and his wife, and had married them. And now I want to tell you of the experience I had there.

When supper was ready, we all sat down at the table,— all of us, for there were five children, ranging in age from nine years down to six months.¹⁾ The father held the baby in his lap, and the next youngest sat in a high chair. Father, the head of the house, said grace, and the three oldest children also said a prayer, in unison. The one in the high chair said, "Abba, Father, Amen"; and baby said, "Abba." We all ate with a will and were in the best of spirits. When we were through eating, before the father returned thanks, the oldest of the children, a boy, got up and brought a book and laid it before his mother. She looked at her husband, expecting him to say something. And he said to me: "We always have family worship after supper, and Anna [that was the young

1) Ps. 128, 3. 4.



RUSSELL

mother's name] does the reading, for she can read German better than I. [This was a German family.] But do you do the reading to-day!" "O no," said I, "I am your guest and join in whatever is your custom." So Anna read. But papa would always inject some very simple explanations and ask questions of the children, and occasionally the children, especially the five-year-old girl, would ask a question. Then an evening prayer was said, and a short verse was sung. And then father returned thanks.—Never in all my life did I attend a more beautiful family worship.

Then mother cleared the table and washed the dishes. Meanwhile I played with the children and talked with their father, who was of a very cheerful disposition. Then came mother and said the children must now go to bed. And very nicely they all said good night. After a bit the father gave me a sign, placing his finger on his lips, and softly led me to the kitchen door, which stood just a wee bit open. And what did I see? There sat that dear young mother with baby in her lap and all the other four children kneeling about her, in their night-gowns, and each one saying his prayer. Then mother kissed each one of them, and upon their foreheads made the sign of the holy cross. She did not know that I saw it all.

O blest that house where faith ye find.
And all within have set their mind
To trust their God and serve Him still,
And do in all His holy will!

O blest the parents who give heed
Unto their children's foremost need,
And weary not of care or cost:
To them and heaven shall none be lost.²⁾

That man and his wife loved their children with a true and a genuine love. They meant to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.³⁾ They did not restrain their children from being cheerful and happy, they were not

2) Hymn 445, *Ev. Luth. Hymn-Book.*

3) Eph. 6, 4.

forever scolding. The tone that prevailed in that house was not forbidding, gloomy, fearful. However, if a child did something that was really bad, it was corrected and punished.⁴⁾ Mother especially had to attend to that, for father was away at work all day. But after every punishment there always followed some kind encouragement. Mother would speak about as follows: "Do you see, when you are bad, some little devil is at your ear and whispers: Be bad! And his whispering goes 'way down into your heart. And *you* cannot drive that away. You must say: Dear Savior, drive that devil away! And then the devil will *have* to go away." I must admit that I taught Anna this.

I think I shall add nothing more to this story.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

VI.

DEAR EUNICE:—

To-day I will sit down like a professor, and teach you two lessons, two very great, weighty, and vital lessons. You will have to conform strictly to these instructions, if you would give your children the right bringing-up and do it in the right way. I am sure that is what you want to do.—Now, don't allow yourself to think that I consider myself so awfully wise. No, indeed, I don't consider myself so awfully wise at all. And yet, I know of a certainty that I shall say just the right thing. How is that? Because in all my instruction I shall be guided, *not* by my own wisdom, but by the *Word of God* alone.

And this is the first lesson: *In all the work of bringing up your little children let the WORD OF GOD alone be your guide.*

So much has been said and written on how to bring up children. One wise man writes so, and another writes otherwise; one wise aunt or mother or grandmother says so, and another says otherwise. But God, God also says something.

4) Prov. 13, 24; 22, 15; 23, 13. 14; Heb. 12, 9.

By what or by whom will you be guided? By what some wise man wrote? By what some wise aunt says (perhaps a spinster at that), or some mother or grandmother? Eunice, it ought to go without saying that you must and should wish to be guided by what God says. If in the fear of God you do that, then *you* have "good understanding";¹⁾ indeed, then you are wiser than all unbelievers, who are the "enemies" of God and of all believers, and your enemies too; then you have more understanding than all your teachers, whether they be authors of books, or aunts, or mothers, or grandmothers.²⁾ Then, yes, then your behavior and your action will be well-pleasing to *God*, you will be truly wise and understanding, and your way will be the right way.³⁾

Now comes the other lesson: *Whatever you do according to the Word of God for the proper training of your little children must be done in LOVE.*⁴⁾

If in the whole work of training your children you would strictly conform to all the instructions of the Word of God, and you did it not in *love*, it would all be a heartless, cold performance, and you would be — "nothing."⁵⁾ You would not be well-pleasing to God, and you would not be a true mother to your children.

You will say: "Oh, I certainly do love my children!"

I gladly believe, Eunice, that you are saying this with all your heart. And still, still you must examine yourself whether your love to your children is TRUE LOVE AND OF THE RIGHT SORT.

You want me to explain myself, and I will tell you. — Many mothers, though they love their children, love something else far more than they love their children. What is that? They love THEMSELVES. Let me tell you how this is. I will show you how this is so in various ways.

1. The children are active and in high spirits, and they laugh and play and shout, but for Mama, the lady, this is

1) Ps. 111, 10; Prov. 1, 1—5.

2) Ps. 119, 98, 99, 100.

3) Ps. 119, 104, 105.

4) 1 Cor. 16, 14.

5) 1 Cor. 13, 2.

altogether too much noise. She becomes peeved and begins to grumble and to scold and to threaten: "Be still and sit down, or I'll whip you!" She loves HERSELF more than her children. — Why certainly, there are times when a mother has a headache and cannot stand such noise and then tells the children to be quiet. But I am not speaking of that.

2. A wife is called a housewife because the house is the sphere in which she must follow her calling. For this reason Schiller, the German poet, in one of his best poems, called "The Lay of the Bell," says thus: —

Within sits another,
The thrifty housewife;
The mild one, the mother —
Her home is her life.
In its circles she rules,
And the daughters she schools,
And she cautions the boys,
With a bustling command,
And a diligent hand.
Employed, she employs;
Gives order to store,
And the much makes she more;
Locks the chest and the wardrobe, with lavender smelling,
And the hum of the spindle goes quick through the dwelling;
And she hoards in the presses, well polished and full,
The snow of the linen, the shine of the wool;
Blends the sweet with the good, and from care and endeavor
Rests never.

So God the Lord would have it.⁶⁾ But there are wives and mothers whose mind is strongly bent on pleasure. They like to go out often. They think that of twelve months one month at least should be entirely free from household cares and nursery troubles and be devoted to pleasure. Because of this turn of mind their children are a constant hindrance to them, and they are out of sorts and ill-humored, and they lament and complain about their hard life, or — they leave

6) Ps. 128, 2; Prov. 31, 10—31; Titus 2, 4. 5.

their husband and their children to the attentions of a maid, if they have one, and go away. They love THEMSELVES more than their children.

3. Children, little children, will sometimes quarrel with the neighbors' children, and many a mother, without fair investigation, will side with *her own* children. Why is this? Just because they are *her own* children. And this goes to show that such a mother loves herself first of all. At bottom she loves, not her children, but HERSELF. Her sentiment is this: Will they quarrel with *my* children?!

4. Many mothers simply let their children have their own way. If the child says: "I want to!" then so it must be; and if it says: "I don't want to!" then that, too, is good. These mothers love THEMSELVES more than they love their children. Why so? They treat their children just as some fashionable lady of leisure treats her lap-dog. The dog must have his way, for that is her ladyship's pleasure, don't you see?

5. Many mothers say: "I never punish my child, never. I just speak kindly to him." And they actually do so. They think that is the right and loving way to treat children.

Here I should like to tell you a little story. — Many years ago I was in a gathering where there was just such a young mother who talked and acted in the way just described, and thought she was giving her two children a most excellent training. At supper-table her little five-year-old son sat next to me. Of a sudden the little rascal was looking at me with such a comical expression on his face. I thought, What does he want? And, behold, he put his finger into the butter and was ready to smear it on my coat; but I took hold of his hand. His mother saw this, but said nothing. After a few minutes, while I was just talking with my other neighbor, I felt something against my side, and, behold, the little rascal had actually daubed a large chunk of butter on my coat. And you should have seen his eyes! The loving mother did actually get up and take her son into the next room. But soon the boy returned and was in the best of spirits. I suppose his mother had "spoken kindly" to him. After supper

the lady of the house asked me to take off my coat, and she tried hard, but alas! in vain, to remove the spot the butter had made.

Is the love that such a mother has for her children *true love and of the right sort?* I say, No! Such mothers love *themselves* more than they love their children. It hurts these mothers themselves too much to punish their children. Let become what will of their children, they will not punish them. And you have just seen what becomes of such children. Such mothers also think that their children would not love them if they punished them. It is quite the other way. Children who are humored by their mothers, and never punished, care very little for them. They, too, care only for *themselves*. On the other hand, just those children whose mothers punished them when they had deserved to be punished think very highly of them and will never cease to honor them.

My dear Eunice, see that your love to your children is *true love and of the right sort.* After all, your children are nearest to you. Love them *as you love yourself!*⁷⁾ Do not love yourself more than you love your children. Let your children always feel and realize that you love them, by day and by night, when they are well and when they are sick, in fortune and misfortune. But love them *in the Lord.* Let the love of Christ, the love with which Christ loves your children, constrain you.⁸⁾ Remember that your children are children; they are not grown up as yet. Treat them as children.⁹⁾ Be lovingly patient and considerate with their childish and childlike ways and devices. Correct them, punish them, — but in love, never in anger; — but punish them whenever punishment is indicated though it hurts you to do it. Otherwise your love for them is not true love and of the right sort.¹⁰⁾

Ah, yes, Eunice, and when the Lord takes one of your children from you, do not love *yourself* more than you love your dear little child. Your child then is with the Lord in

7) Matt. 22, 37—40.

8) 2 Cor. 5, 13. 14.

9) 1 Cor. 13, 11.

10) Prov. 13, 24.

eternal bliss.¹¹⁾ Weep, but be of good comfort, yes, give thanks unto the Lord and rejoice. *You* have then lost your child for a little while, but *your child* has gained everything.

What a long letter this has come to be! Thus it is when one tries to be a professor. But after all, I am just

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

VII.

DEAR EUNICE:—

Now let us suppose your child to be five years old, the child of which I am speaking in these letters.

If from the very beginning you have followed my instructions in these letters, then the influence of that little devil¹⁾ who keeps coming to the ear of your little child to make it bad will diminish steadily. Your child will then have grown more and more familiar with its Savior, and almost without exception it will say, "Dear Savior, drive that devil away." Surely that is a fine thing. And at family worship your child will become ever more interested and attentive. It will understand more and will answer more questions and will itself put questions. And this, too, is a fine thing. In short, your child is a dear child of God from the time of its baptism. And you have nourished it.

But now the time has come when you will speak to your child of something else. And what may that be? SCHOOL. You will say, "Now you will soon be going to school."

My dear Eunice, you surely know what I am thinking of you. I believe you to be a truly Christian wife and mother, who seeks her own salvation and that of her children through faith in Christ Jesus. If I did not think that of you, I would not have written as I have been doing in these letters. All I have written I have written only with the thought of reminding you of things already familiar to your heart by reason of the Holy Spirit within you, and to "stir up your

11) Matt. 19, 14.

1) See Letter V.

pure mind,”²⁾ lest you be tempted and deceived by the evil example and wicked talk of unbelievers and of such as profess to be Christians,³⁾ and to prevent sin, which so easily besets you too,⁴⁾ from making you loath to run the course which God has set before you. I am writing to-day from this same view-point and with the same intent.

You see, Eunice, now that your child is about to go to school, there approaches a great and momentous turning-point in its life, full of terrible possibilities. For your child now enters upon that time, that long time, which, if your child lives, will never end, the time in which your child will no longer be constantly with you and under your immediate supervision. Hereafter it will be away from you for hours almost every day and under the influence of other people.

In *school* your child, which is Jesus’ little lamb, will be among strange children and with other teachers. What will it get to hear? What will it learn there? What will they instil into its little heart there? I say “into its little heart.” The Holy Spirit dwells within its little heart, even as in your heart.⁵⁾ But sin also dwells within its little heart, even as in yours.⁶⁾ Now, what is to be fed and fortified in school? What the Holy Spirit puts into the heart of your child, or the promptings of sin? Most certainly what the Holy Spirit puts there. Most certainly not the promptings of sin. Is it not so, Eunice? I know you agree with me.

Naturally, when unbelieving parents hear what I have just said, they will ridicule me. They will say: “Our child is to go to school to learn reading, writing, arithmetic, and other things useful for this life, so it amounts to something in this world. That is all.” And many parents who belong to Christian churches speak similarly. They would perhaps not ridicule me, but what will they say? To begin with, they say exactly what the unbelieving parents say. And then they will say: “As for religion, we will send our child to

2) Heb. 8, 10. 11; 1 John 2, 20, 27; 2 Pet. 1, 12; 3, 1.

3) Phil. 3, 17—19.

4) Heb. 12, 1.

5) 1 Cor. 3, 16.

6) Rom. 7, 17. 20.

Sunday-school, and that is enough." Is that right? Is that enough? For example, would it be enough to give your child but one meal a week, or to wash it but once a week? That makes you laugh. But consider, Eunice! Is the soul of your child of less importance than its body? Does its soul require less care than its body? Should you be less careful of the eternal life of your child than of its life here on earth, less careful for its faith than for the development of its understanding? No, to send a child to Sunday-school is *not* enough.

And let me tell you another thing that is very sad. Most parents, by far, who say they will send their child to Sunday-school, and that this is enough, what do they do at home? They do not teach their child the Word of God at home, nor do they have family worship. I think you know that. I know it positively to be a fact. And so their poor little lamb of Jesus is to hear a little of the Word of God but once a week!

But now suppose you send your child to school to learn reading, writing, arithmetic, and other useful things of this world, and teach it the Word of God at home, and also have it present at your family worship, and then, too, send it to Sunday-school,—how would that be? Would that not be sufficient, would that not be right? It would be insufficient at any rate. And it would be right only in case you simply *could* not do otherwise.

Let me explain this, Eunice.

It would be *insufficient* at any rate. For, when your child has come to be six years old, it must begin to learn in full earnest, to learn—not only reading, writing, arithmetic, but also and above all things the Word of God. It must be taught the Word of God "systematically," that is to say, in an orderly way, one thing duly following the other, beginning at the bottom and going on and on, and higher and higher; then again the foundation that has been laid must be enlarged and strengthened and rebuilt, to confirm the mind. All this you could not do at home. For such an undertaking you probably have not the necessary schooling (I mean no

offense!), and you certainly haven't the necessary time. Nor has your child the necessary time after school. It can't learn all day long. It must play and get fresh air. It takes trained teachers to do this work, and your child needs this instruction right during school-hours. — So this other arrangement is insufficient at any rate.

And is it *right*? How can it be right, if it is insufficient? Of course, if you simply *cannot* make any better arrangement, you will have to do the best you can for your child: teach it the Word of God as well and as much as you can, and send it to Sunday-school. But if you can have something better, — O Eunice, you would wrong your child very seriously if you did not make use of it, if you did not so resolve as soon as you thought or spoke of sending your child to school!

But though I speak this way, I am persuaded better things of you.⁷⁾

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

VIII.

DEAR EUNICE: —

To-day's letter is a continuation of my last one, and I shall continue just where I left off. So, will you please look up at least the last sentence of that letter?

Is there anything better? Is there anything better for your child? What I mean is this: Are there schools which teach the Word of God right and in that systematic and orderly way of which I spoke toward the end of my last letter? Are there schools where Jesus' lambs are taught by well-trained Christian teachers?¹⁾ Are there any *Christian* schools?

Thanks be to God, yes, there are such schools. —

Before I say more about such schools, let me tell you how they sprang into existence. You know that in our

7) Heb. 6, 9.

1) John 21, 15.

country we have public schools, owned and controlled by the state. The state demands that all children be properly schooled. The state does not want the children to grow up in ignorance of reading, writing, arithmetic, and of geography and United States history; it does not want its citizens and inhabitants to be as ignorant as the Hottentots of Africa or as some Russians and other foreigners. And for this reason the state has instituted public schools, with free schooling for all children. I think this is very good and right. And the state certainly spares no expense or effort to make these schools as efficient as possible.

But *religion* is *not* taught in the public schools. Religion cannot and should not and dare not be taught in the public schools. For these schools are meant for all children without distinction, whether they belong to Jew or pagan, to Christian or unbeliever. So, what religion would the school teach? No, indeed, public schools cannot and should not and dare not teach religion. The secular state has no business to meddle with religion. It cannot and should not and dare not meddle with religion, since all sorts of people compose the state. And consequently the teachers, too, of our public schools are all sorts of people, Jew and pagan, Christian and unbeliever, and what not.

Now, although these schools teach no religion, yet many things are there taught and said which are *contrary to God's Word*. I will merely cite a few instances. I myself have seen public school text-books which teach that this world came to be in a manner far otherwise than the Word of God teaches.²⁾ And I myself have there heard a child told that it will save itself if it does good.³⁾ And the teachers simply will not, cannot keep still on religion, though really they have no right to teach it. It is so in the grade schools, and in the higher schools the situation is far worse.

Now, Eunice, do you want your child to go to a school where no real and true religion is taught at all, where more-

2) Gen. 1, 2.

3) Matt. 1, 21; Acts 4, 12.

over such deadly poison is constantly being instilled into its heart?

Our fathers did not want that, and so they instituted *Christian church-schools*. Our Synod does not want that, and so it bends all its efforts to maintain and improve and increase its Christian church-schools. In these Christian church-schools the Word of God is taught as it should be taught. And not that alone. In our Christian church-schools our children are in the keeping and under the supervision of Christian teachers who in every way guide and direct and speak to the children according to the Word and will of God.

Eunice, will you not at once, as soon as ever you think of sending your child to school, resolve to send it to a *Christian church-school*? I fully trust you will.

And right here let me mention another little matter. When you talk to your child about going to school soon, do not do as so many mothers do; do not frighten your child about school. Do not say: "Wait till you get to school, then you will see! You will have to be good then and work hard, or you will get a licking from the teacher!" Rather speak after this fashion: "When you get to school, you will get to learn reading, writing, arithmetic, and many other things. And above all things you will get to learn about your dear Savior, and the teacher will tell you all much better than I ever told you. Aren't you glad? Now you will want to be real good and work hard in school!" Then your child will grow impatient for the time when it may go to school.

May God grant you the right mind and true mother-love, dear Eunice! I know parents who simply would not stay where they lived because there was no Christian church-school in the place.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

IX.

DEAR EUNICE:—

Now your child is six years of age. Now it goes to school, to a CHRISTAN CHURCH-SCHOOL. I have two little granddaughters, six years of age, who every morning early ride seven miles to the church-school. They know the prayer:

Lord Jesus, who dost love me,
O spread Thy wings above me,
And shield me from alarm!
Though Satan would devour me,
Let angel-guards sing o'er me:
"This child of God shall meet no harm!"¹⁾

And their mothers know it, too. And you also know it.²⁾ Now you have neatly washed and combed your child, and you give it a mother's kiss, and right proudly it goes to school for the first time. Or will you go along this first time, to introduce it to his honor, the teacher, or to her ladyship, the schoolma'am?

What will be the *language* used in that school? Without a doubt, it will be the English language, for that is the language of our country. Of course, in teaching the Word of God the language is only the means to an end. The chief aim must be that children learn the *Word of God*.³⁾ Where the home language is entirely German and the parents newly immigrated, family worship would suffer if the children became too suddenly and entirely estranged from the German language. And yet, the children should learn the Word of God in the language in which they will grow up, the language they will soon learn to use almost exclusively. In many cases the State law enjoins this. There is need of mutual toleration and consideration in this matter of language.

Just think, Eunice, I know of parents who were glad to send their children to a Christian church-school, and then took them out again because the State prohibited the German language as a means of instruction. However, it was

1) *Ev. Luth. Hymn-Book*, No. 33.

2) *Ps. 91, 11. 12.*

3) *Ps. 87, 5. 6; Acts 2, 1—11.*



permitted to teach *religion* in German, and that was done in their school, religion was taught in both languages; and still these parents took their children out. I trust they will come to their senses and send their children again. For they will realize that the *Gospel* is of more importance than the German language. Surely the Savior does not say: Preach the German language to every creature, but He says: "Preach the Gospel to every creature."⁴⁾ Pity the poor lambs! I confidently trust that these parents will prize their children and the eternal salvation of their children more highly than the German language, and will send the children to the Christian church-school again. God grant it!

So much for that.—Hereafter I will not follow your child from year to year, as I have done so far. I will now speak of the entire time that your child goes to the church-school. I expect, too, that soon there will be more little brothers and sisters going along.

And to put one thing out of the way at once, I shall, first of all, say that a church-school costs money. The State raises the money for its public schools by taxation, and all citizens alike must pay for it. But if Christians want a church-school, they must defray the entire cost themselves, of buildings, salaries, books, and all. They gladly do this, however. They gladly spend money for the spiritual and eternal welfare of their children.

True Christians, whose mind is enlightened by the grace of God, join together, and jointly they do all in their power to maintain and promote the Christian church-school and to make it the best possible school. True Christians will not stop to consider whether they are young or old, married or single, whether they are parents or not, whether they have children of school age or not; they seek not their own profit, but the true profit of the whole congregation and the whole Church.⁵⁾

And to begin with again, they gladly give all the money necessary for a church-school.

4) Mark 16, 15.

5) 1 Cor. 10, 24. 33; Phil. 2, 4.

When they meet with other Christians, they speak of the Christian church-school, and demonstrate the necessity and blessing of it.

When they meet with fellow-members, they consult how the school might be improved more and more, and yet still more. Elders speak of it in the meeting of the church council, voting members speak of it in the voting members' meeting, women speak of it to their husbands.— You see, Eunice, it is necessary, it is absolutely necessary, that our schools be up to date, as the saying is. In secular branches our church-school must come up to the standard of the public school, or it will lose out. In the end the State would close our school if we did not conform to its standard. And as for the instruction in the Word of God—it is impossible to make that too good. O Eunice, I shall frankly tell you: Generally speaking, there is among us a great lack of true and live interest in the church-school, among pastors, among teachers, and among the members of the congregation. May God reform us! In these evil days, when our church-schools are so violently assailed, may God of His mercy grant that we wake up and do everything in our power for the welfare of our church-schools!

And it is a fact that our teachers have so far not received the proper salary. As a result they had to look for other employment, outside of their school-hours, so as to be able to provide for their families. That fatigued them and harmed their school-work, and destroyed the zeal and joy they had in their calling. And what shall I say of a congregation of rich farmers that will require its pastor to teach school and then scarcely give him a living wage! — Oh, bother, I wish I did not have to speak at all of the accursed money!

Eunice, you also can do a great deal for your church-school. You are already doing a great deal when you send your children there. You are setting a good and a shining example. You will derive rich blessings from it.⁶⁾ But, do

6) 2 Cor. 9, 2; Matt. 5, 14—16.

still more. Open your lips and speak for your church-school! Speak to your husband! Be a true helpmeet unto him for good.⁷⁾ Speak for the church-school with other Christians, wherever you meet them. Sow the good seed as far and as wide as possible! But NEVER speak against the teacher! Not among other Christians, and least of all in the hearing of your children. The teacher is a poor sinful human being, even as I am and you, too. If at any time you think that your teacher has done something that is not right, then consider, first of all, whether it is not a matter which you can pass over in silence.⁸⁾ If you think that cannot be done, then go and speak to the teacher himself, alone.⁹⁾ Or let your husband go and talk with him.

And in general, be helpful to the teacher in his work. Be kind toward him. Show him all manner of kindness because he is teaching your children, just as you should show your pastor all manner of kindness because he teaches you the Word, the Word of Life.¹⁰⁾ Speak to the teacher about your children in a way that he will see how glad you are to send your children to his school. This will encourage him and cheer him up. Watch that your children learn their lessons well and are regular. Don't let your children miss school unless sickness or some other real necessity compels.

But—what more shall I write? Your own Christian mind will prompt you in the things that are right.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

X.

DEAR EUNICE:—

Now that your child goes to a Christian church-school, you must not allow yourself to think that you need not give it as much care and attention as heretofore. Quite the contrary, your child requires *more* attention now.

7) Gen. 2, 18.

8) Matt. 7, 3, 4.

9) Matt. 18, 15.

10) Gal. 6, 6.

As you read this, you may want to say: "Well, how is this? For five days in the week my child now for hours at a time is in school, where it learns the Word of God better than I can teach it at home. Why should I now devote even *more* care and attention to my child?"

I will explain this to you. I will point to two circumstances, which, however, are closely related to each other, and they will make clear what I said.

1. Your child now is growing up right along. That's true, is it not? Of course it is. Your child acquires an ever better understanding of the Word of God, and ponders that Word in its heart more consciously. This also is true. But it is likewise true that the old Adam, with all sins and evil lusts, is bestirring himself more and more actively within your child. From day to day your child will become more keenly aware of the enticements and temptations of the old Adam; it will feel and perceive these enticements and temptations, and yet—it is so inexperienced, so weak!

2. And in addition to that, your child now in school, yes, in the Christian church-school, is among other children, and gets to see and to hear many things that are not as they ought to be, things that are not right, not good. At first this will shock your child, and it will think, and it will say: "Oh, but that is bad!" for you have given it a Christian training. But gradually, by degrees, it will become accustomed to these things, and evil desires will arise within its poor, inexperienced, sinful heart: your child would like to do as others do.

Now, Eunice, you must not marvel that I say such things of a Christian church-school. Do not argue and say: "Do such things obtain in a Christian church-school? What am I sending my child there for?" Do not say that, but listen to what I shall say now.

Not all parents who send their children to a Christian church-school rear their child as properly as you do from the very beginning. Quite a number of children enter the Christian church-school without knowing anything whatsoever of the Word of God and of their dear Savior, and their

mothers have either spoiled and humored them, or neglected them and left them to their own devices. Such children will have many a bad habit, and will also do downright wicked things. Yes, indeed, Eunice, so it is. And now say for yourself, should such children not be accepted in a Christian church-school? Ought not you, as a Christian woman, rather to rejoice that such children come and learn the Word of God and learn to love their Savior, and are properly taught and instructed by the teacher? — Eunice, our Christian church-school is a meadow on which to pasture not only *those* lambs of Jesus that have already been on *good* pasture, but *such* lambs of Jesus also as have hitherto been very *poorly* fed. Why, most certainly! Our Christian church-school is a *missionary institution* in which children are to be made lambs of Jesus. I wish Jews and pagans would send their children! If, however, a child is incorrigibly bad, it will have to be dismissed, for our church-school is not a "bad school," a correction school. We might compare our church-school to a hospital, where the sick are to be made well. In a *hospital* you expect to find some that are very sick, and some that are not so sick, and some that are convalescent, is it not so? Just so it is with every Christian church, too. Oh, my dear Eunice, we all are diseased with sin, and we all are to be made well by the Word of God, and to recuperate more and more, that we may arrive at a state of true spiritual soundness.¹⁾ And just so it is with a Christian church-school. And the chief aim of the Church and the church-school alike is to distribute that one great, wonderful, divine healing medicine which will without doubt bring eternal life. And what may that be? It is *the Word of the grace of God in Christ Jesus*. Whoever takes that in faith is saved.²⁾ That is taught in the church-school. There the children learn to pray and to sing: —

Yea, Jesus' blood and righteousness
My jewels are, my glorious dress,
Wherein before my God I'll stand
When I shall reach the heavenly land.

1) Eph. 4, 11—14.

2) Eph. 2, 8. 9.

Surely you understand all this, Eunice. And now you will also understand that I was right when in the opening of this letter I said that now that your child goes to the church-school, you will be required to give it more care and attention than heretofore. And you will also understand that this implies no reproach to the Christian church-school.

I will let you ponder well upon this, and close for to-day.

ALWAYS YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XI.

DEAR EUNICE:—

Have you earnestly thought about what I said in my last letter? Have you, indeed? Then you will fully realize that now that your child goes to school you must give it especial care and attention. I want to speak of some of the things which you will have to watch.

To begin with, let me speak of a few things that are more external.

Accustom your child well to *orderliness* and *cleanliness*. You know the old sayings: "The child is father to the man. Early habits last through life. As the twig is bent, so the tree will grow."

First of all, then, let your child learn *orderliness*. — Shall I tell you, or not? I myself have had quite a number of children. They are all grown up this long while, and some of them have departed this life. Among them there were two little boys who differed immensely, as far as *orderliness* is concerned. Their mother had considerable trouble in teaching one of them. When he got up in the morning, he would just throw his nightgown on the floor, and when he retired in the evening, he would be just as careless with his clothes. His brother, on the other hand, was neatness itself. He would hang his nightgown away in the morning, and in the evening he would arrange his clothes well over his chair and place his shoes right properly next to the chair. His mother never had to tell him.

Now, of course, I am not acquainted with your child, and don't know what trouble you may have in that line. But don't let your child get to be like that son of mine of whom I spoke in the first place. Insist that he do like the other one. His school-books should always be put in their proper place when his lessons have been learned, and likewise his playthings when he is through playing. And if the child of which I speak is a girl, then the need to train it to orderliness is even greater. A grown-up girl or a housewife who is disorderly is positively offensive. Occasionally one meets with that kind of a woman, who lets things lie around anywhere and makes such a litter on the floor that, if you come unannounced, you scarcely know where to step. — And don't say: "I always straighten things up when my child is through." No, let the child tend to that. Your business is to train it that way.

Now as to *cleanliness*. — I have spoken of that on a former occasion. However, now, as your child goes to school, it will get to see many dirty hands and faces and necks and ears. Take care lest it likewise falls into the horrid habit. Your child should rather set a good example in cleanliness. See that it washes itself well every morning, and give it to understand that you will not tolerate "water-marks" about its wrists and neck, or dirty ears. While at play, of course, your child will often get dirty, and this is entirely as it should be, and wholesome. Don't scold too much about that. But when playing-time is over, and your child, let us say, comes to the table to eat, then it must be clean and neat.

Here again I must make especial mention of the girls. If the habit of cleanliness is not bred in them, they will eventually belong to that class of women who start the day unwashed, who wash themselves only when they want to make calls or expect callers, or when the dirt becomes altogether too thick. What sort of mothers will they be! They will certainly not train their children to neatness and cleanliness. The Holy Spirit says of a woman: "Strength and honor are her clothing."¹⁾ The Hebrew word for honor here signifies

1) Prov. 31, 25; 1 Tim. 2, 9.

the dignity that comes with neatness, and the sense of the verse is: A woman's most becoming ornament is diligent work and cleanliness and neatness.— So, now I have even taught you some Hebrew!

Oh, but I wanted to speak of something altogether different! I shall have to spare that for another letter, or this one will be too long.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XII.

DEAR EUNICE:—

To-day I will speak of three very bad habits, each more serious than the other, and you will have to exercise the greatest precaution, just in the years when your child is in school, lest it become addicted to any, or perchance to all of these three bad things.— You must never forget that sin, the old Adam, is imbedded in your child, and inclines it to all that is evil. The teachers will do what they can to keep your child and all the children in school from these bad habits, but the chief responsibility and task remains with the parents at home, especially with the mother. You must never forget, Eunice, what I told you in letter X.

The first bad habit of which I want to speak is this that your child may get into the way of using *bad, offensive, indecent words and expressions*, or that it may even learn to *swear*.

As soon as you notice anything of that sort, you will have to fight it. How will you do that? Remember that your child is a child of God, and tell it that such things are not becoming a child of God, and that thereby it offends the Holy Spirit within its heart.¹⁾ And remind your child of the Second Commandment and of Luther's explanation of it, which it has learned in school. If it uses such words again, and then again, you will have to punish it.— It should go without saying that at home your child should hear and

1) Eph. 4, 29. 30; 5, 4.

learn only the best of language, and that such expressions as "darn it," etc., must not be used.

The next bad habit is *lying*.

As soon as ever you hear that your child utters the first lie, you must be active and get after that with the same earnestness and in the same manner as described before.²⁾ Tell your child, too, that the devil spoke the first lie,³⁾ and that by lying it becomes like the devil. And tell the story of Ananias and Sapphira.⁴⁾

If your child tells a lie, you must not at once think that it learned that in school. Did it never lie before it went to school? Lying comes of itself, from out of the sinful heart. Adam lied when the Lord called him and said unto him: "Where art thou?"⁵⁾ And surely Adam did not learn it in school. He did not want to confess the wrong he had done, and so he lied.

Let me give you an example of how children lie. This was in a Christian family. The table was being set for the evening meal, and a little daughter, not yet of school age, was in the kitchen and said: "Mama, may I help?" And Mama said: "Yes, you may. Here is the butter; take it to the dining-room, and set it on the table." And the child obeyed, and helped in more things. At table the mother noticed that some neat markings had been made with a knife across the butter, and she inquired: "Who did that?" No one answered. "Did you do that?" she asked the little girl. Now it was neither wrong nor sinful to do this, but the little girl—it was she who had done it—felt guilty and said "No!" This particular little girl, it is true, had lied on previous occasions, but she was by no means in the habit of lying, and her mother could tell by the expression of her face that she was now lying. So, in all earnestness she asked again: "Did you do that?" And the girl said: "No, really not!" Then her mother took her into another room and there

2) Eph. 4, 25; Col. 3, 9.

4) Acts 5, 1—11.

3) John 8, 44.

5) Gen. 3, 9. 10.

remained with her for quite a while. One could hear the child crying. Then the mother returned, and the little tear-stained girl was clinging to her. She had received real punishment, but she knew that the punishment was just, and that her mother loved her.

Lying is a most horrid and harmful vice. You cannot have any real confidence in a child that has told a lie. Though it tells the truth, a suspicion attaches to it. And when a child gets into the habit of lying, its character is ruined for life. It is only right that it should lose the confidence of its fellow-men. Therefore, Eunice, fight with all your might against every lie, whether great or small, that you detect in your child!

And beware, Eunice, lest your children learn lying from you or from your husband! — Now, will you be offended and get angry with me? But just read on a bit. — Children are very keen observers. They observe very closely all that you say, and pattern after you. Now, let us say, some disagreeable agent comes to your door, and your husband answers the call because you are busy in the kitchen. The agent says: "May I see the lady of the house?" and your husband says: "She is not around just now." Your child hears that, and do you know what it thinks? It thinks: Papa has told a lie: Mama is in the kitchen. If your husband does not want to bother with the agent, let him tell him so in a polite way, and be done with it.

Still another instance. Of a summer evening an affectionate papa sits out on the lawn with some of the children. Mama is within, preparing lemonade. Some acquaintances come along the street and inquire whether Papa and Mama and the children will go walking with them. Papa doesn't like to and says: "No, thanks. We can't very well this evening, for Mrs. —— has a headache." Then one of the children whispers to the other: "Papa is telling a lie! Mama has no headache." Now it is possible that Mama had a little headache, but not so the children noticed it. Such fibbing is very common, and it teaches the children to lie. — Are you angry with me now?

The third bad habit is — what shall I call it? — *secret unchastity*.

I would not mention this at all if I did not know of a certainty that this is found among very young children. And it is a very, very dangerous thing. And the child's mother is the only one able to overcome this.

I want to say frankly what I mean. Occasionally children in these tender years acquire the habit of playing with their sexual organs. They have learned somehow thereby to arouse sensations that please them. Boys especially get into the way of doing this because they want to overcome some irritation or itch. When you notice this, you must investigate. You may find a white gathering, called smegma, which causes this itch and irritation. The best thing to do in such a case is to go to some reliable doctor. He can help you very easily, and tell you what to do. He may want to circumcise⁶⁾ the boy. That is a very good thing, and if the doctor so advises, let him do it.

So, if you notice this thing I have spoken of, use your utmost care in stamping out the evil. I beseech you by the love of the Savior and for the sake of the eternal welfare of your child that you do your utmost to break your child of that habit. If you neglect to do this, your child will in later years acquire a habit of unchastity that will ruin it in body, mind, and soul.

May this suffice. At a later time I shall have to speak of this again.

These are very bad habits, Eunice, of which I have spoken to-day. But I had to speak of them, for I want to be, for you and for your child,

A TRUE OLD FRIEND.

6) Gen. 17, 23.

XIII.

DEAR EUNICE:—

You are a sincere Christian woman, of unfeigned faith in your Savior Jesus Christ. There is no doubt that you earnestly seek your own salvation and that of your children, through faith in the beloved Savior. It is fitting that your name is Eunice.¹⁾ Your aim, then, is to lead your children, who through Baptism have become Jesus' lambs, in the right pasture, that they may remain Jesus' lambs as long as they are young, and become Jesus' sheep as they grow up. And so you also want to keep them from all evil influences, from all soul-poison, and you wish to train them to all that is good and wholesome for them.— Is this not your heart's utmost desire, a consummation you most devoutly wish for?

Now, by what means will you be able to accomplish all this?

Only, exclusively, by means of the *Word of God*.

There is positively no other means for this purpose. It is for this very reason that you send your children to the Christian church-school.

The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing into the inmost mind and soul.²⁾ The Word of God is like a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces:³⁾ it consumes what is evil and burns it away, and it kindles within the heart and soul both strength and desire for all that is good; it shatters and penetrates the hard crust which the old Adam ever again forms around the heart. The Word of God, indeed, it alone, is the Sword of the Spirit⁴⁾ with which you can successfully struggle against the devil, who with "deep guile and great might" is intent upon robbing you of your children.

What Word of God am I speaking of?

Strange question, you may think. Surely there is but one Word of God, and the Word of God is ever the same!

The Word of God, Eunice, let me tell you, is *twofold*.

1) 2 Tim. 1, 5.

2) Heb. 4, 12.

3) Jer. 23, 29.

4) Eph. 6, 17.

It is *Law* and *Gospel*; and Law and Gospel differ widely from each other. In the *Law* God merely tells us how we should be, and what we should do and not do, and *threatens* us. In the *Gospel*, however, God tells us of His grace in Christ Jesus, and through it He gives us His Holy Spirit so we may believe in Jesus Christ, and rejoice to be His own, and serve Him, and obtain eternal salvation.⁵⁾ By the *Law* no man is justified in the sight of God, for by the *Law* is the knowledge of sin, that is all.⁶⁾ But the *Gospel* is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;⁷⁾ for, as I have just said, through the *Gospel* we receive the Holy Spirit. Hence it is by means of the *Gospel* that we become heartily sorry for the sins which the *Law* shows us; it is by means of the *Gospel* that we sincerely repent of sin and flee to the Savior for forgiveness, and then earnestly amend our sinful lives.

Now you may be thinking: Well, but this has been a rather lengthy lesson on the Word of God and on Law and *Gospel*!

Yes, it has; but do you know why I wrote it all? I don't want you to think that by the *Law* and by constant *threatening* you can succeed in making your child good and well-behaved, well-behaved in the eyes of God. If forever, perhaps a hundred times a day, you would say to your children: "Don't do that, or I'll whip you!" what would the result be? For the time being you might or would succeed in keeping them from this or that improper thing; outwardly, to all appearances, you might even succeed in keeping them from contracting this or that bad habit. But you would not be treating your children as Jesus wants His lambs to be treated. You would be merely training them as your boy probably trains his puppy. In that way they would not become good at heart and well-behaved in the sight of God. On the contrary, by this procedure, as far as you are concerned, the result would be only that secretly your children would still

5) John 6, 63; Gal. 3, 2. 5.

6) Rom. 3, 20.

7) Rom. 1, 16.

do what you do not want them to do; you would make them untruthful, hypocrites. The Law and your words of threatening have no power to make your children truly good and well-behaved in the sight of God. As soon as they would arrive at the age where you no longer can threaten to beat them, you would see your bankruptcy, — your influence over them would be gone.

Now you will probably ask, "Well, what shall I do? It certainly is a difficult thing to raise children properly."

Yes, it is a difficult thing. But God will supply you with the proper wisdom if you ask Him in faith.⁸⁾ And I will now tell you in just a few words the chief rule by which your actions should be guided.

Remember that your children have learned the Word of God in school, and they have also learned it from you. They know their Savior. Now tell them in each case, very simply, what they should do and what they should not do. If they do not obey at once, tell them again. If they are disobedient, and do not want to do as you say, speak to them very earnestly, and call to their mind their blessed Savior, whom they love, and who wants them to keep the Fourth Commandment.⁹⁾ And if they still disobey, then punish them.

This may suffice for to-day. May God help you to do all things right. Indeed, He will help you.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XIV.

DEAR EUNICE: —

*May the Word of God in your house be a light that never goes out!*¹⁾

O Eunice, sin has so blinded mankind that many people, in fact most people, if they read this, would say: "I would not live in such a house! Pooh! — everlastingly the Word

8) Jas. 1, 5. 6.

9) Eph. 6, 2.

1) Col. 3, 16; Ps. 119, 105; Prov. 6, 20—23.

of God! That must be a dark, gloomy, sad, and tiresome home. Everlastingly the Word of God! Pooh!"

Why, it is altogether different from that. A home in which the Word of God is the light that never goes out is not dark, gloomy, sad, and tiresome. Quite the contrary, such a home is bright and light and cheerful and full of joy and pleasure. There the children laugh and play and shout and sing. When the parents can join in, they, too, laugh and play and shout and sing. Papa goes about the room on his hands and feet, and Sonny climbs on his back; and Papa lies upon the floor, and Girly and the baby pounce upon him, and Mama laughs and claps her hands. Sister dresses her doll and talks to her like a mother, and Brother tries to stand on his head and takes a tumble. And ah, what more shall I say,—they all are gay when the days are good, and they all are of good cheer when the days are evil. For they have the right doctrine, they have the testimonies of the Lord, which are sure and make the heart sure. Theirs is a house of God; the kind Savior dwells there in the midst of His own; and the beauty of that house is true and sincere holiness.²⁾ Yes, indeed, they have the true light, and it throws beneficent and cheerful rays through this life into eternal life.—On the other hand, where the Word of God does not shed forth its shining light, there all is dark and gloomy and sad, though there may be much shouting and boasting when the days are good. For they have not the testimonies of the Lord, which make sure the heart. There all is ill humor and sadness and despair when the days are evil. There unholiness disfigures everything. And when death enters, ah, then there is utter gloom.

Now then, Eunice, let the Word of God shine brightly in your home!

You and your husband must have daily *family worship* together with your children. That is to say, read the Word of God together, sing and pray. Be sure that for these readings from the Bible you make selections that are suitable

2) Ps. 93, 5.

for your children and intelligible to them.³⁾ You remember that in a previous letter I told you of a nice family worship I once attended. I will tell you now of another family worship which I attended, and which was *altogether ill arranged*. It was in a pastor's house, at that. I was a guest there for a few days. The pastor was of the opinion that in family worship he must read the entire Bible, page by page, from beginning to end. Don't you think that he read many things which the children did not in the least understand? Most certainly. When I was there, he was just reading the Prophet Isaiah, chapters 13 to 20, always two chapters at a time. And he gave no explanations whatever. You should have seen the children! They paid not the slightest attention. They were terribly bored. And—let me say this, too—by the time they got away from home, they all fell away from the Word of God entirely. Such observations prompted me to write the stories of the Old Testament in simple language, so children can understand them, and always in very short lessons, with a short prayer and a hymn verse at the close of each lesson. I called the book *Feed My Lambs*. I have since written two more volumes. One contains the Gospel stories, and the other tells the stories of the Acts of the Apostles, together with a little of Church history, arranged in just such short lessons for family worship, where there are children. They will soon appear in print. Before I sent them to the printer, they were all read in family worship with my grandchildren.

You must not think, Eunice, that I tell you of my books from a spirit of pride or vanity. I have written them for the welfare of Jesus' lambs, and just for family worship where children are concerned. These books contain many suitable prayers and hymn verses. I would also advise that you teach your children Luther's morning and evening prayers, which you find in the Catechism. And as for hymn verses, they learn them in school.

See to it that your children learn the lessons the teacher

3) 1 Cor. 3, 1. 2; 1 Pet. 2, 2; Heb. 5, 12. 13.

assigns them. What a nice thing it is for the mother to learn together with the children! Father can do this too, of course. I am speaking now especially of assignments in religious instruction. And let it be your concern that your children get all their assignments properly, in other branches as well.

Don't let your children forget to pray when they go to bed. Remind them of it in a kindly way, and quicken their desire for it. Or will you do as that dear young mother did whom I observed in her kitchen, as I told you in another letter? That would be very nice indeed!

As soon as your children go to the church-school, take them to church with you, too, regularly. Take them with you, I say; I do not say: Send them. If parents send their children to church and do not go themselves, they command something they do not themselves observe. And that is worthless. And when I say: Take them with you, I mean you should let them sit with you, too. If children sit together, they so easily begin to whisper. Train your children from an early age to go to church with absolute regularity. This is wholesome for their entire lifetime. It is a very bad thing for parents to send their children to Sunday-school and to tell them they need not attend the preaching service. Thus the children are systematically trained not to attend preaching services.

And let me add still another thing. Keep your children back from intimate intercourse with children of unbelieving parents. You can imagine that they will learn nothing good from them. A girl whose parents had fallen away from my congregation and were now living in our neighborhood came and played with my grandchildren. She was a very nice girl and well-behaved, and they became close friends. Later this girl also went along to the children's services, and said that possibly she would be allowed to go to church-school, too. We already hoped that the entire family would be regained this way. But one Sunday, as the pastor spoke of the devil, this girl whispered to my granddaughter: "I don't believe there is such a thing as a devil." And soon other

things came to the surface, and there was an end to the friendship. Such children get to hear much that is sinful from unbelieving parents, and then they tell all this to other children. Therefore it is not good to have your children associate with them. They might become affected with the same spirit.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XXV.

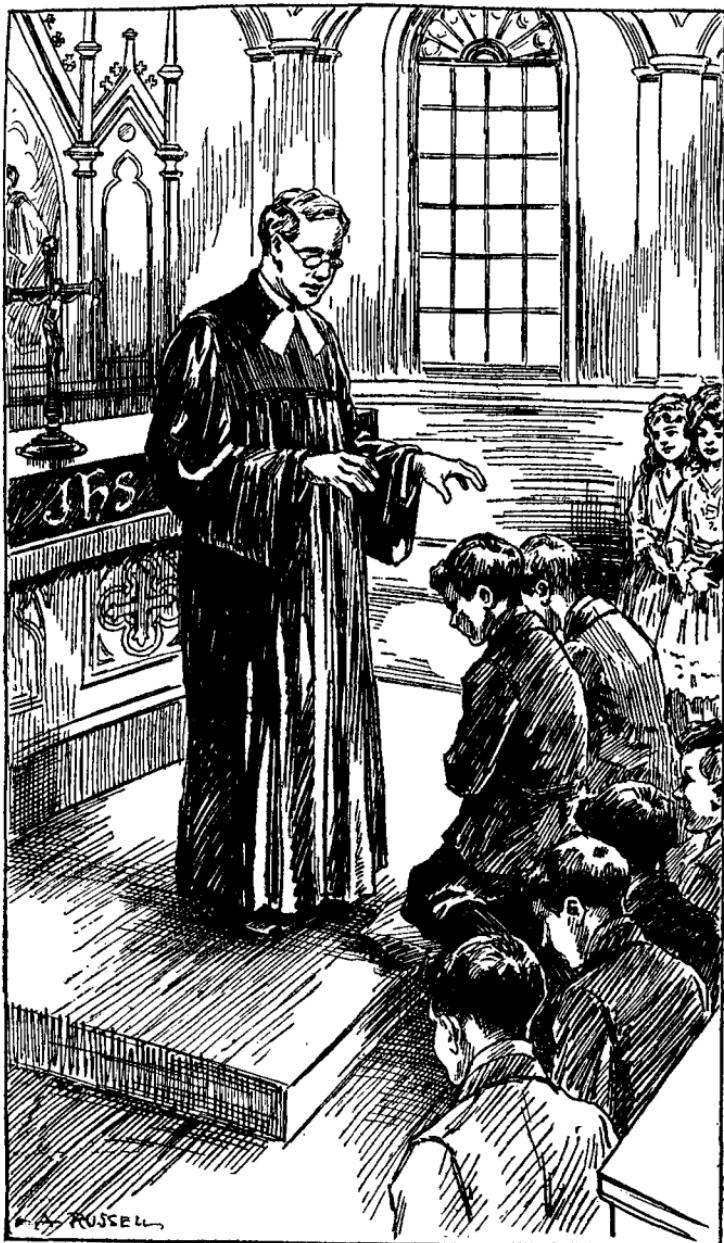
DEAR EUNICE:—

To-day I want to speak of the time when your oldest child is about to be *confirmed*.

To confirm means to *make firm*. Your child is to be made firm. *Wherein?* In the faith in its Savior Jesus Christ. *By what means* is it to be made firm in the faith in its Savior Jesus Christ? By means of the Word of God. *Why* should it be made firm in the faith in its Savior Jesus Christ by means of the Word of God? So it can resist the devil, who seeks to devour it.¹⁾

O Eunice, you love your child, and the Savior loves it still more. You carried your child and fed it with your heart's blood; you gave it birth and nursed it yourself, and you raised it at great pains to yourself. But your Savior has redeemed it from the sin and damnation into which it was born, and shed His blood for it in great suffering and agony, and in Baptism He made it His own dear child, which He desires to take to heaven. And now—now there is slowly beginning a bad time for your child. Soon it will no longer go to church-school. Soon it will be growing away from that constant supervision you have been able to give it so far. It will grow larger right along, and older. And its old Adam will also grow larger right along, together with manifold sins and evil lusts to which your child has hitherto been a stranger. Hereafter, unavoidably, it will have to mingle more with the world, which is so full of wickedness and

1) 1 Pet. 5, 9; Eph. 6, 10—17; Jas. 4, 7.



temptations. And now, now the devil would devour it. And so now, now it is to be confirmed in its faith in the Savior Jesus Christ by means of the Word of God.

Now it certainly is true, Eunice, that if you have from the beginning and right along treated your child in the way I have advised in these letters, then *you* have already made it firm in the faith in its Savior. And the church-school did the same. This is a great and a precious thing, a matter upon which God bestows His blessing and great and precious promises, so to have the Word of Jesus its Savior sown into the infant heart of your child, and to have the fertile rain and the life-giving sunshine of the divine Word and the Holy Spirit ever and ever again bestowed upon it.²⁾ Thus the Word of Jesus, as it were, becomes wedded to your child, and the faith in Jesus Christ, that heavenly plant, has shot its tender roots all through your child's soul, and it will be a difficult thing to uproot it entirely. But now, *as far as its childhood years are concerned*, the *last* effort is to be made to make your child firm, firm in the faith in its Savior, by means of the Word of God.

Who shall do this work? The *pastor!*

Oh, how sad and miserable and well-nigh hopeless a task it is, in fact, what a *contradictory* thing it is, to expect the pastor to put the *finishing* touches to the child's religious training, when the child's mother never gave it its *primary* instruction, and a Christian schoolteacher was never permitted to *continue* that education, in order to make the child firm in the faith which the Holy Spirit implanted into it in Baptism, the faith in its Savior Jesus Christ!

Yes, the pastor is now to give your child its final instruction. He is to build higher upon the foundation which you laid, and which was systematically strengthened and enlarged in the church-school. The pastor is to bring to your child's remembrance all the things it already knows, and so to establish it in all these things, and so to enlarge upon all these things — mark this well! — that your child

2) 2 Tim. 3, 15—17.

will not be carried about with divers and strange doctrines³⁾ which it will get to hear a plenty; that it be not tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;⁴⁾ that it may continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which it has heard;⁵⁾ that it may be confirmed against the assaults of the devil, against all the enticements and threats of the unbelieving world, and against all the evil promptings that dwell within its heart.

The pastor must do this by means of *instruction*. Do you pray, Eunice, that God of His grace may to this end bestow upon him His Holy Spirit and wisdom and diligence and much love! How pitifully lonesome and deserted is a pastor whose parishioners do not pray for him!

Pray also for your child, now that it goes to confirmation instruction. Pray that God the Lord may prosper the instructions it now receives, for time and eternity. Pray for this with an earnestness and intensity a thousandfold greater than that with which a pious farmer will pray the Lord God to prosper the seed which he has sown, so he may successfully harvest it. And always let your child tell you what it has heard and learned each day, and say something about it in kindly interest. That will make your child, and you, too, more conscious of what it has heard and learned.

Surely you understand, Eunice, that *instruction* is the chief thing in confirmation. In fact, this is confirmation itself. When people ask you: When will your child be confirmed? you may answer: On the coming Palm Sunday, or, Next June, as the case may be, but in saying this you refer merely to the day when your child will be placed before the congregation and will make public confession of its faith, and will pledge allegiance to its Savior, and will receive the benediction. All this is very good, but after all it is merely a human arrangement and custom that prevails in our

3) Heb. 13, 9.

4) Eph. 4, 14.

5) Col. 1, 23.

Church. If it is done without due instruction preceding it, it is but a shameful abuse of the name of God. So you want to pray and be helpful so the ceremony of confirmation be a solemn truth, and not a hollow show. Pray and be helpful so that by the grace of God your child may sing and say:—

Baptized into Thy name most holy,
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
I claim a place, though weak and lowly,
Among Thy seed, Thy chosen host;
Buried with Christ, and dead to sin,
Thy Spirit now shall live within.

Yea, all I am, and love most dearly,—
To Thee I offer new the whole;
Oh, let me make my vows sincerely,
Take full possession of my soul;
Let naught within me, naught I own,
Serve any will but Thine alone!

Depart, depart! thou Prince of Darkness!
No more by Thee I'll be enticed.
Mine is indeed a tarnished conscience,
But sprinkled with the blood of Christ.
Away, vain world! O sin, away!
Lo, I renounce you all this day!

And never let my purpose falter,
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
But keep me faithful to Thine altar,
Till Thou shalt call me from my post;
So unto Thee I live and die,
And praise Thee evermore on high.⁶⁾

Amen.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

6) *Ev. Luth. Hymn-Book*, No. 400, vv. 1. 5—7.

XVI.

DEAR EUNICE:—

Now we will say that your oldest child has been confirmed, and no longer goes to the church-school.

What now?

Yes, indeed, what now? The question is important, and not easily answered.

For what shall be done now? Will your child continue going to school? Will it attend a public school? Will it go to high school?—If only we had *Lutheran* high schools in all our larger cities, such as we have in Milwaukee and Chicago and Deshler, Nebr., and Fort Wayne, Ind.! We could have them, if only we, all of us, earnestly wanted them.

Or, what else will your child do? If it is a girl, will she learn sewing, or something else that she may follow up later as an occupation? Or will she remain at home and help you at your work? That would be a good thing. Would it not be a good thing? She would learn to become a good housewife. For, if a girl forevermore sits and sews, or is confined in a store or factory or office, or even if she goes to high and normal school or college and becomes a teacher of some sort, and then marries, she is entirely inexperienced and helpless and ignorant concerning her great and chief calling. For to be a housewife and mother is the very highest calling for a girl. That is the calling for which every girl should be trained. Parents frequently have their daughters taught all imaginable branches, and neglect the one great and chief thing. And still they dearly wish their daughters to be married.

But what if your child that has just been confirmed is a boy? What shall become of him?

When I think back of my own boyhood days, I must admit that I had all kinds of notions, but I really had not the least idea what I wanted to be. I imagine that is the case with most boys of that age. When I was fifteen years old and confirmed, my parents simply sent me to college. They wanted me to get a good education, and then they would see what profession I might choose. My father's wish was

that I should become a well-educated publisher and book-dealer, and my mother wanted me to be a minister. As for me, I heard these things, and did not know what I wanted to be.

But right here I want to tell you something, Eunice.— If by the grace of God your son is a God-fearing lad, and gifted, don't you want to do as that Eunice did for whom you have been named?¹⁾ Don't you want to let him become a minister of the Gospel, a pastor or teacher or missionary? Of course, he can serve his Savior in other callings, too. But if by the grace of God he becomes a *true and faithful* pastor or teacher or missionary, is not that the very best calling for your boy?²⁾ If he takes heed to himself and to the doctrine, and continues in them, he will both save himself, and them that hear him.³⁾ To save men, to point poor sinners unto Jesus and so save them, to feed the lambs of Jesus, to feed the sheep of Jesus⁴⁾—is not that the very best calling on earth? Dear Eunice, here on earth all is vanity, vanity of vanities.⁵⁾ But to save men—that is not vanity. And the calling, the life's vocation to save men, is not that the very best there is?— Meditate upon this. Speak to your husband about this. Tell this to your son.— Oh, there is such a lack of laborers in the harvest of the Lord! The Lord Jesus admonishes us to pray the Lord that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.⁶⁾ Don't you want to send your boy to one of our colleges, or to one of our teachers' seminaries?

Don't say that you haven't the money to do this. Others will supply what you have not. We are very happy to find God-fearing and gifted boys who want to serve the Lord this way, and we gladly supply the necessary money. We have treasures for that purpose. Your pastor knows about it, and will take care of the matter, if necessary.

1) Acts 16, 1—3; 1 Cor. 4, 17; 16, 10.

2) 1 Tim. 3, 1.

3) 1 Tim. 4, 16.

4) John 21, 15—17.

5) Eccl. 1, 2—11.

6) Matt. 9, 35—38.

Parents are apt to make a big mistake when they choose a calling for their sons. They often choose something that pleases themselves, the parents, without sufficiently taking into account whether their sons are adapted to that calling. I know of two such cases among my own relatives and friends. In one case the parents desired that their son become a doctor. So they sent the boy to college. But he had neither the desire nor the ability to learn this. He went through the school and got his degree, but in practise he was a failure. He was of no account as a doctor, and soon lost his patients. In the other case the boy was very eager and very talented to play the piano. His mother thought at once: He will have to become a great and famous musician! The boy thought so, too. And now the poor fellow learned music, music, music, and music without end. O yes, there are many who can play the piano well, but great and famous musicians are very rare birds; there are about one or two in a century. What became of the boy? He developed into a poor music-teacher and piano-tuner, who scarcely managed to provide for his family.—Nor is every boy fit to become a teacher or pastor or missionary, even though he may be God-fearing and gifted for studies. I have known teachers and pastors and missionaries who were God-fearing and diligent, men who had a good education, and yet they were unfit for their calling. Why so? Because they could not keep discipline in school, could not govern a congregation, were not able to choose the right word and the right manner to meet the heathen who opposed and mocked and ridiculed.

Parents should make a careful study of their children's talents and inclinations and abilities, so as to be able to give them the right direction in the choice of a vocation or calling; and they should pray God to direct them and guide them and bestow His blessing on what they do. You know your child from its birth, Eunice. But notwithstanding that, when you plan its future calling, you must make a close and careful study of all its peculiar traits and conditions. And lift up your hands unto Him who is the heavenly Father of both yourself and your child. He knows your child best

of all. And He will then guide and control all things for your good.

There is one thing that is altogether wrong, and many parents are proud to tell of it. As soon as the boy is out of school, they let him go out and find a job, any job that brings money; and when he finds a job that brings more money, they have him throw up the first job in favor of this one. Occasionally such a boy develops into a man of ability, but as a rule he becomes a mere chaser after money, an undependable laborer, who never amounts to anything at all.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XVII.

DEAR EUNICE:—

Your child which has been confirmed has now arrived at an age where it has acquired enough intelligence and judgment, also spiritual intelligence and Christian judgment, no longer to be treated as a mere child. And yet it is still but a child as to intelligence and judgment, a child also in spiritual intelligence and Christian judgment. It is altogether inexperienced. It looks forward into life, and understands so little of it. All is entirely new. And especially in this respect it is still entirely lacking in intelligence and judgment, that it does not know and perceive how woefully lacking it is in intelligence and judgment. And so your child is still sorely in need of supervision and direction and guidance, of education, in short.

Now let me give you a Bible-text, and let me briefly explain it, and then try to impress it upon your mind and heart. The text is this: "*The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*"¹⁾ "*The Spirit*" is the Holy Spirit. "*The bride*" is the Church, the congregation of believers,

1) Rev. 22, 17.

scattered over all the earth and known to God alone.²⁾ "*The Spirit and the bride*" are they who have and are ruled by the Holy Spirit. These "*say, Come!*" They say to one another and to every man: Come, come to Jesus the Savior! "*And let him that heareth,*" him that eagerly heareth and cometh to Jesus the Savior, let him "*say, Come!*" let him say to others: Come! "*And let him that is athirst,*" let him that longs for Jesus and His salvation, "*come*" to Jesus and to His salvation. "*And whosoever will,*" whosoever is moved by the Holy Spirit to desire Jesus and His salvation, "*let him*" come to Jesus and "*take the water of life freely.*" "*The water of life*" is Jesus Himself and His salvation, His grace and the forgiveness of sins, and His guidance and direction, and in the end eternal life. Every one who "*comes*" receives this "*freely*" and without price.³⁾

So, Eunice, now I have given you this Bible-text and have briefly explained it. Now I want to impress it upon your mind and heart, so that you may use it for the good of your child.

Your child, the child to whom you, as a faithful mother, have shown the Savior, the child who in school was led to his Savior, the child who in confirmation was made firm in his faith in the Savior, your child who, nevertheless, is so inexperienced,— this your dear child will now more and more feel the presence of his old Adam, that is to say, of his sinful nature and disposition so full of lusts and evil desires. He will meet more and more with all kinds of people of a worldly mind, and will get to see and to hear a great many things that are not good. And now is the time when the devil will especially waylay him and seek to draw him away from the Savior and into perdition. All this I have already told you in Letter XV, when I spoke of your child's approaching confirmation. But I am saying it again, for these things now apply, and will apply, with ever increasing force.

How are you, then, to train and educate your child so he will remain with his Savior?

Here is where our text applies.

“The Spirit and the bride” have said to *you*: “Come!” And you have come to Jesus and His salvation. *Now do you say to your child: “Come!”* Say to your child ever and ever again: “Come!” “The Spirit and the bride” are ever and ever again saying “Come!” to you, too, Eunice. Do you, yourself, ever and ever again come to Jesus, and call and invite your child ever and ever again to come to Jesus. What is the entire life of a Christian? It is this, that ever and ever again we poor sinners come to Jesus, our Savior. This “Come!” with which you invite your child *is the right way in which you must now train and educate your child.*

Your child will hereafter, more than heretofore, feel how his old Adam prompts him to this sin and to that. Watch, watch over your child! And when you notice that his old Adam is causing, or has already caused, him to stumble and fall, then, with the burning love of a mother and with a heart filled with the love with which Jesus loves your child, say: “Come! Come to Jesus and His salvation, O my dear child, you dear lamb of Jesus!”

But stop, stop! Before we go on, I *must* speak of a very nasty and disagreeable matter, a matter so nasty and disagreeable that one is ashamed to speak of it. And yet I *must* speak of it. If I did not, you might some day weep and say: If only my old friend had told me of that!

So, now, this is what I mean.

Your child, inexperienced as he is, will now begin to feel the rise of his *sexual desires and impulses*. This is quite as it should be. So God has created human nature. But your child does not in the least understand *to what purpose* God has so arranged human nature, namely, for the orderly propagation of the human race. Now it is quite possible that your child will begin to do what thousands and hundreds of thousands of children of that age do. It is possible that your child will begin in any one of a multitude of ways, and by various means, to irritate his *sexual organs* until he experi-

ences some satisfaction. — Eunice, the longer your child does this, the more will he want to do it. And if he acquires the habit of doing it, and does it regularly and frequently, he will degenerate physically, and become weak and miserable. And since, of course, he will do this *secretly* — for self-evidently he will be ashamed to do it openly, and will even feel that he is doing something wrong — his soul, too, will suffer. He will constantly have a bad conscience, for, though he knows that he should not do these things, yet he will ever again do them. And so, what will become of his childhood prayers? What will become of his childhood faith in his Savior? What will become of the trust which as a child he had in you, his mother? All this will disappear. And your child will become a pale, sickly, timid child, slinking into a corner, and deceitful. And pity, pity the child, if he keeps on doing this as he grows older and larger. Boys are far more in the habit of doing this than girls are; but occasionally girls also fall into the habit. Watch, O watch over your child, Eunice!

You will ask how you can tell and know whether your child has begun such a thing. — You can tell, if only you are on your guard. Watch the night clothes and the bedding and the underwear for traces of it.

You will say: And what shall I do when I do notice it? Let me answer this question point by point.

1. Speak to your child some time when you two are alone. Explain what a very bad thing this is, ruining both body and soul; explain it somewhat in the way I have just explained it. Tell your child that God does not want this, I think you will be moved to tears as you say this. And tearfully do you say to your child: "Come, O come to your Savior, my dear child!" — Eunice, it is very unlikely that your child will ever forget these your tears. I recall that my dear mother once wept over me when I was a boy. It was this way. We children were playing dominoes in our dining-room of a winter evening. In the midst of a game my mother said to me: "Carl, please get me a glass of water!" In an undertone I grumbled: "You always want

something!" My mother heard this, and tears came to her eyes. I have never forgotten that.

2. When you have so spoken that "Come!"-message to your child, then fold him into your motherly arms and pray together with him to the Savior and ask Him to help. For, "with might of ours can naught be done."

3. Then plead with your child, with a tone of voice and with eyes that bespeak your earnestness in this vital matter, to come to you and tell you whenever the temptation to repeat this evil thing comes upon him. Get your child to promise to tell you at once if ever he has committed this sin again. Surely, your child will perceive the deep and wounded love from which his mother speaks, and he will kiss you and weep and pledge what you desire. And if by the grace of the Savior he keeps his promise, then the battle is well-nigh won. — O Eunice, I assure you that in this kind way you will accomplish far more than by scolding, threatening, and punishing.

4. But keep your eyes open! And occasionally inquire from your child, in all kindness, how he is getting along.

5. And you must also do what you can to diminish the force of the temptations which your child feels to do this evil thing. How is that possible? There are a number of things to do. First, plan to have your child get plenty of fresh air and vigorous exercise, so he can sleep soundly. Secondly, see that his bowels are regular. Thirdly, pray with your child when he goes to bed in the evening, without calling his attention overmuch to these sexual matters. And see whether he has gone to sleep. If not, stay with him until he has gone to sleep. Fourthly, see that he gets up promptly in the morning. That is the time when the temptation is strongest. Promptly and quickly out of bed, and busy!

6. Now I shall say something which will probably cause you to shake your head at first, and your husband, too, may think that way. But read what I say.— When you have noticed that your child has begun this bad thing, and even when you have noticed nothing of the sort, still, now is the time when he should be told in a proper way, suited to his

age, some of the principal things pertaining to sex-life. *He should be told the difference between man and woman, of their different sexual organism, and to what purpose God has so arranged this, namely, that the man might beget and the woman might conceive and bear and give birth to children.* If your child is a girl, you ought to explain that to her; if your child is a boy, *your husband* ought to do it.

Are you shaking your head? Just consider how things are in reality. *Your child will get to hear these things anyhow*, but from whom? Of other children of his own age. It is far better that he should hear them of his mother and father. I say again, your child will get to hear these things anyhow, but how will he get to hear them? In a silly, nasty, dirty, unchaste way. It is far better that he should get to hear them of his father and mother, in a sensible, decent, chaste, and clean way. Your child will then understand more fully that his Papa is his father, and his Mama is his mother. And he will look up to father and mother with respect and with love. And moreover,—and this is the chief thing,—he will not want to listen to filthy talk, and he will not want to do filthy things, and he will not want to do that particular filthy thing.—Eunice, believe me, most parents make a great mistake in not explaining these things to their children.

I had meant to write more about that Bible-text I gave you, but I think I had better save that for another letter. What I have said about that evil thing will give you much to think about.

May God counsel your dear mother-heart with His Holy Spirit! This is the prayer of
YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XVIII.

DEAR EUNICE:—

Think of my last letter. The time of life upon which your confirmed child is now entering is attended with grave dangers. He will now get to feel the strength of the assaults of the devil, the world, and the flesh. And yet your child is



so inexperienced, — I should rather say, so ignorant and stupid. And at the same time he does not realize how inexperienced and ignorant he is. And so the devil says: "Hello, are you confirmed now? Listen, I will 'unconfirm' you!" And to make his assault effective, he employs not only your child's weak flesh, the miserable old Adam, but also the wicked world.

This makes me think of something. When I was fifteen years of age, just after I had been confirmed, my parents sent me to college. I already told you about that. The institution which I attended was in Prussia, near the Rhine. We had an old professor of mathematics. He was very kind to me, for he saw that at home I had learned much and had been diligent. One day he said to me: "My little man" (that was the way he always addressed me), "there is a Supreme Being, but whatever you hear beyond this simple statement is nonsense." He meant to say: There is such a thing as a God; the Bible and its teachings concerning Christ are nonsense. And then there was another professor, who one day told us to write a theme on the subject: "Every Man Must Forge His Own Fortune." What I wrote may be summed up thus: Everybody ought to be diligent, acquire knowledge, and put forth his best efforts so that he may amount to something in this world; but all depends on God's blessing. After the professor had read all the papers and was returning them to the class, he almost threw mine at my head and fairly yelled: "What sort of silly stuff is this? Everlastingly God, God! What business have you to write about God?" — And then there was the old president of the college. One Saturday, on entering the classroom, he said: "To-morrow you need not go to church. To-morrow Runge will deliver a speech. Go and hear him. Then you will hear something sensible at least." Now, this man Runge was an infidel who traveled throughout Germany delivering speeches against the Bible and against the Lord Jesus. And the old professor of whom I spoke in the first place said to us one Saturday: "To-morrow I want you all to go to church, for to-morrow it is my turn to go and see if you are all there.

So I want you to go, even though you do not like to go. Do you suppose I like to go?" And oh! what bad boys there were at that college! What sins and shameful things I saw and heard there! It was something terrible.

Now, Eunice, if your son after confirmation attends some public high school, he will not get to hear and to see anything better. The text-books that are in use there contain many things that directly contradict the Word of God. And you know that the teachers there are all sorts of people, and some of them are given to wrong beliefs, while some are even outspoken infidels. And they do not hold their tongues in matters of religion, although they have no business to teach religion. It also is a well-known fact that many unchaste things are said and done among high school pupils. And if your daughter after confirmation attends some high school, she will find it the same. And if your son goes to work, what kind of people will he find, what will he get to hear and to see? Or if your daughter goes out to learn sewing, or to work in some store or factory or office, do you suppose things will be better there? Poison, poison, nothing but soul-poison is instilled into your child. The devil will take care of that. It cannot be otherwise.

Ah, but what are you to do? There is but *one* thing to do. Think of the Bible-text which I wrote in my last letter: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come!" *Ever again and incessantly call your poor child to come to Jesus and to His Word.* O yes, there is still another thing that you can do and should do. *Pray* to the Good Shepherd that He may save your child, who is His dear child, save him from the devil, the world, and the flesh.

However, Eunice, the right way to say, "Come!" is not merely to say to your child: Come to the Savior and to His Word! but rather to *lead* your child to his Savior and to His Word. And permit me to remind you how you must do this. You already know.

Above all things — yea, above all things! — have *family worship* in your house every day, with absolute regularity.

That should consist of Bible-reading, a short prayer, and a hymn-verse. It would be a nice thing, indeed, to sing a hymn-verse or two. Be sure that this family worship is so arranged that your confirmed child, and the others, too, will *understand* everything well. If they do not understand what they hear, it will not benefit them. And be sure to make it *short*. Otherwise, by reason of their poor flesh and blood, your children may get tired of listening, and will begin to dread family worship, rather than be eager for it. I hope you and your husband will want to read more than that for yourselves. Do so, jointly or privately. Read the epistles, for instance. They are written for *you*.

Why did I say that above all things — yea, above all things! — there should be family worship in your home? Let me explain. For one thing, you certainly ought not to let a day go by without nourishing the *souls* of your children with the Word of God. You surely do not allow a day to go by without nourishing the *bodies* of your children with earthly food. And then there is another consideration. It may be that your children do not pay attention to the sermon they hear at church even though they sit next to you, and so are kept from whispering and from other things they ought not to do in the house of God. How can that happen? Well, your children are children, and the sermon may be too difficult for them, and beyond their grasp, though this is not as it should be. And it is very doubtful whether they sing the hymns attentively, and follow the prayers from their heart. Now *in case* your confirmed children, who no longer attend the parochial school, do not pay attention in church, and *in case* there is no family worship at home, — what then? Then your confirmed children have *no Word of God at all*. Then it follows of necessity — of necessity, I say — that their faith in the Savior dies a slow death. For faith in the Savior is sustained only by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit does this only by means of the Gospel, which is the hearing of faith.¹⁾ What an easy thing it is then for

1) Gal. 3, 2. 5.

the devil to “unconfirm” your child! You see this result plainly in many a house where there is no family worship. There the confirmed children go to church just as long as their parents compel them to do so; however, as soon as the parents can no longer compel them to go, they fall away from God. And right here you see the principal reason why your confirmed child—it is he of whom I am now speaking—stands in need of family worship: in family worship he receives a daily antidote against the poison which is daily instilled into him; in family worship the Holy Spirit by means of the Word of God daily enters your child to oppose the evil spirit, who by means of the talk and example of wicked people approaches your child to tempt him and make him fall away from his Savior.

Possibly you will say: But my children, when they are confirmed, still go to the children’s services, or to Sunday-school. Do they? I don’t see much of that done. Is your confirmed child an exception? If so, that is very fine. For it is just in a well-conducted children’s service or Sunday-school that your child may learn more than in the regular preaching-service, because there the Word of God is taught in the order of the Catechism, and simple explanations are given, and the lesson is impressed upon the mind of the child. But surely you will not mean to imply that for this reason I ought not to say: “above all things—yea, above all things!—have family worship in your house with absolute regularity”? Once a week is not enough of the Word of God, especially since the devil feeds poison to your child every day.

Since, however, I have just been speaking of children’s services, Sunday-school, and preaching-services, let me say still another thing. “The Spirit and bride say, Come!” Take your confirmed child along to the children’s service, the Sunday-school, the preaching-service! Go there together. Sit together, just as you sit together at home in family worship. And when church is out, speak of what you have heard in Sunday-school and in the sermon. Ponder the Word of God, which you have heard, in your heart, as Mary

did,²⁾ and in a kindly way impress it upon the mind of your child.

And go to the Lord's Supper together, often. But consider well, and talk to your child about it beforehand, what is meant by the words: "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Ask yourselves and ask your child whether you, as poor sinners, are athirst for Jesus and His salvation, whether with all your heart you long for the Savior and His grace, the forgiveness of your sins. There is an old German hymn which is a suitable prayer for such an occasion. Let me reproduce it as follows:—

Lord Jesus Christ, my Good Shepherd, come and feed me in the meadow of Thy grace! All the help and salvation I so sorely need is with Thee alone! Have mercy on me! Lead Thy poor sheep to the still waters, to the living waters of Thy mercy. O Lord, have mercy! All other food is vain. Thou art the Bread of Life, and he that eateth of Thee shall nevermore hunger. O Lord, have mercy! Thou art the living Fountain: fill Thou the cruse of my frail faith with comfort, with the comfort of Thy Gospel. O Lord, have mercy! Grant that I may truly feel sorrow for my sins. But grant me faith also, that true faith which comforts itself with Thy merit. O Lord, have mercy! Grant me a truly penitent heart, lest I toy with sin, or lull myself into false security. O Lord, have mercy! O Lord, behold how defiled my conscience is and laden with sin! Bestow Thou upon it but one drop of the blood which on the cross Thou hast shed for me! O Lord, have mercy! That blood has abundant power to cleanse me, to make me so clean that I may stand in the sight of the holy God. O Lord, have mercy! Amen.

And then go to the Lord's Table and take the water of life freely. Beware lest attendance at the Lord's Table become a mere habit with you. And let your child go in person to his pastor, his spiritual guide, and tell him that he wishes

2) Luke 2, 19. 51.

to go to confession and to the Lord's Table. That will give the pastor frequent occasion to talk to your child.

Ah, yes, Eunice, all this should not be allowed to become mere habit. And yet it is a good and wholesome thing for your child from the beginning to become accustomed to all this, so that it will become second nature with him, as it were, his new nature, born of the Spirit.

As for you, his parents, it certainly behooves you in all your life and behavior to set your child a good and a living example in all that is right and salutary and godly, so that he may pattern after you. This is the right way to say, "Come!"

When a mother has an unbelieving husband, as was the case with Eunice, the mother of Timothy,³⁾ then such a mother alone must say this "Come!" to her child, and set the good and living example. This makes it much more difficult, it is true; but she need not despair, as you may see from the case of Eunice and Timothy.⁴⁾ God will bestow His blessing.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XIX.

DEAR EUNICE: —

Your child is now confirmed, and the older he gets, and the more he develops physically, the greater and mightier will the temptations become that arise from his own flesh, and with which the wicked and unbelieving world besets him, and also the devil, who is the power behind the flesh and the world. And you, the child's dear little mother, will find it more and more difficult to keep your child in the straight, but narrow way that leads to heaven.

Thank God ceaselessly if you find that your child is going this way. But do not allow yourself to become careless and overconfident! There is always danger, and the danger is great. Remember how David, whom God so highly favored,

3) Acts 16, 1.

4) 2 Tim. 1, 5.

suddenly fell to such terrible depths,¹⁾ and for a whole year remained hardened in impenitence,²⁾ until at last God in His mercy brought him to himself again.³⁾ Remember, too, how shamefully Peter, the disciple and apostle, denied his Savior three times before those wicked servants.⁴⁾ But the Savior at once brought him to repentance with His loving look.⁵⁾ And also remember what James the Apostle says: "*Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*"⁶⁾ May I explain this a little? I will at once apply the words to your child. If your child now attending some higher school, or working somewhere, is tempted to some wicked thing, and *inwardly, within his heart, feels the drawing and enticing power of the temptation*, what, then, is the real situation? Then your child is *drawn away of his own lust and enticed*; then your child himself is eager to do that wicked thing. It is so with all of us Christians. We are forever tempted to evil in this wicked world. It is impossible but that offenses, temptations, will come.⁷⁾ It must needs be that offenses, temptations, come,⁸⁾ since the whole world lieth in wickedness.⁹⁾ But when a Christian himself becomes filled with a desire to yield to the temptation, then he is being drawn away of this his own lust and enticed. And when your child is in this condition, what, then, threatens to develop? Then there is danger that this his own lust will yield itself to the temptation and "conceive" it, receive it, and, as it were, become pregnant with it: your child then carries and bears and nourishes within his heart this temptation, and the temptation will grow larger and larger. And then, what will happen? Then the evil lust brings forth sin. Then your child will do that to which he is tempted, and

1) 2 Sam. 11.

2) 2 Sam. 11, 27; Ps. 32, 3. 4.

3) 2 Sam. 12, 1—13.

4) Matt. 26, 69—75.

5) Luke 22, 61. 62.

6) Jas. 1, 14. 15.

7) Luke 17, 1.

8) Matt. 18, 7.

9) 1 John 5, 19.

which he is himself eager to do. And the sin, when it is finished, when your child has developed it, and let it grow strong and mature, this sin then in turn becomes pregnant and brings forth—death, eternal death.¹⁰⁾ Your child then has fallen from the faith and is lost. So says St. James. And, Eunice, it is true that

Sheep that from the fold did stray,
Every faithful shepherd seeketh;
Weary souls that lost their way
Christ, the Shepherd, seeks and taketh
In His arms that they may live—
“Jesus sinners doth receive!”¹¹⁾

Ah, yes, all thanks and praise to God, it is true! Yet, when your child has gone so far, will he then *want* to let the Savior find and rescue him?¹²⁾ Your dear child's danger is very great, and is becoming greater right along. You must realize this. And you will find it more and more difficult to keep your child in the straight, but narrow way that leads to heaven.¹³⁾ You must realize this, too. And you will realize this, too. And you will realize this if you do all you should do for your child.

And what should you do?

Before doing anything yourself, you poor and frail little mother,—or let me put it this way: As you prepare to do what you should do, and all the while you are doing what you should do,—call upon Him who is neither frail nor poor, upon Him who has all power in heaven and in earth.¹⁴⁾ Call upon the Lord Jesus! Call upon the Lord Jesus to guard your child, and keep him, so that the devil, the world, and his own flesh may not deceive him nor seduce him into disbelief, despair, or other great shame and vice; and though he be assailed by them, that still he may finally overcome, and obtain the victory. Call upon the Lord Jesus to seek your child and reclaim him, if ever he has been deceived

10) Rom. 6, 23.

11) Luke 15, 4—7; 19, 10. *Ev. Luth. Hymn-Book*, No. 414, v. 3.

12) Matt. 23, 37. 13) Matt. 7, 13. 14) Matt. 28, 18.

and seduced, and has gone astray and lost his way; call upon Him to bring him back sooner or later, as He brought David back, and Peter. O Eunice, call upon the Lord Jesus in behalf of your child, who is His child, too, and in firm faith say to Him:—

For means it fails Thee never,
Thou always findst a way,
Thy deeds are blessing ever,
Thy path like brightest day.
Thy work can no one hinder,
Thy labor cannot rest,
If Thou design'st Thy tender
Children should all be blessed.

He is your child's best friend. He loves your child even more than you do.¹⁵⁾

And now let me tell you what you should *do* for your child.

To begin with, I want to say something that you may find a strange saying. I will say: *Bring the Lord Jesus to your child.* Don't you think that is a strange way of speaking? You will say: Why, the Lord Jesus is with my child every day,¹⁶⁾ He fills heaven and earth and all things.¹⁷⁾ True. But the Lord Jesus does not approach your child with His grace and mercy otherwise than by means of His *Word*.¹⁸⁾ Only by means of His *Word* does He work upon your child with His grace and mercy. Therefore, do you bring His *Word* to your child, and in so doing you will bring the Lord Jesus and His might and power and grace and mercy to your child. This is the foremost thing you should do.

And so you must maintain *family worship* in your home — I am forever repeating that admonition! — maintain family worship, so that as long as your child is with you, or whenever your child is with you, it meets with the Lord Jesus; and thereby the might and power and grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus approaches your child. And, as I have likewise stated before, be careful to make your family devotion intelligible to your child, and make it short.

15) Is. 49, 15. *Ev. Luth. Hymn-Book*, No. 525, v. 4.

16) Matt. 28, 20. 17) Eph. 4, 10. 18) Rom. 10, 6—8.

And furthermore, let your child ever and ever again hear you say, "Come!" come to Jesus and to His salvation! But you must not say this in a harsh manner, lest your manner of saying it should tire your child and fill it with aversion. Rather say "Come!" in that quiet, mild, and gentle way in which Jesus Himself spoke it.¹⁹⁾ Say it at the opportune moment, just when there is need of it, just when the occasion requires it. Of all people on earth you are the one from whom your child will best accept this invitation.

And do all you can to keep your child from associating and making friends with people of whom it may get to hear and to learn things that either teach altogether wrong and false religion, or things that are nasty, ugly, bad, and sinful. "Evil communications corrupt good manners,"²⁰⁾ says the Holy Spirit just with reference to false religious arguments. If your child cultivates the association and friendship of such people, it is just as if it were forever in the company of people who had a contagious disease. And you would not permit that. Why not? For fear your child might become infected and get sick. But don't you think that the soul, too, can become infected? The soul can become infected as readily as the body. And is the soul of less importance than the body? The soul is of far greater importance than the body. Eternal life depends upon the health of the soul, while only this mortal life depends upon the health of the body. Tell your child this. Bid your child consider what great value God Himself places on the soul of man, prizing it far more highly than heaven and earth, for it is for the soul of man that He gave His only-begotten Son to be crucified. Nothing else did He consider so worth saving, for nothing else did He pay so great a price.

Yes, Eunice, do all you can to keep your child's soul from becoming infected and poisoned.

Keep your child from reading the books and periodicals and tracts that are so widely distributed by sects which spread wrong belief, and by certain associations that are altogether

19) Matt. 11, 28, 29.

20) 1 Cor. 15, 33.

outside of the Christian Church, such as the Christian Scientists and the Spiritists.

Keep your child from reading such books and papers as will only draw away and entice his poor sinful soul far more unto sin than it is already inclined. I am thinking of so-called dime novels and other filthy reading-matter.

Keep your child away from theaters and moving-picture shows, where unchaste and filthy things enter into your child's soul, yes, are fairly poured in as with a muddy stream.

Keep your child away — he is getting older right along — keep him away from dancing-parties and similar places where his poor flesh and blood is enticed unto unchastity.

But how are you ever to keep your child away from all these things? Shall your husband and you do it by simply *commanding* the child and saying: Thou shalt not lust for these things! Stay away from these things! — is *that* the way to do it?

No, *that* is *not* the way.

Mark what I shall now say, Funice, note it well, and learn! For I shall teach you wisdom, wisdom which I shall by no means get from myself, but from the Word of God.

If you parents would simply *forbid* your child to lust for such things, and command it to stay away from them, you would accomplish nothing good. Let me say this again in another way. If you parents would talk to your child in this fashion: "You must not read things that teach false religion or unbelief. You must not read dime novels and like books. You must not go to theaters or to moving-picture shows, for you get to see and hear bad things there. You must not go to dancing-parties and the like, for it is not good. We, your parents, forbid you this. Think of the Fourth Commandment. You must obey your parents! Do you hear? Yes, more than that, you must not so much as desire these things. And that ends it!" — I say, if you parents would talk to your child in this fashion, you would thereby *not better* your child, *but would make him worse*.

I will now explain this. For I am not sure that you understand.

If you would speak to your child after this manner for the purpose of keeping it away from wickedness, you would be using only the *Law* of God. But what does the apostle say? From his own experience, and yet by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he says: "*I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.*"²¹⁾ The apostle then goes on to say that this is not the fault of the just and good Law, but the fault of *sin*, which is deceitful and exceedingly sinful. Now, Eunice, you can understand. Your child is sinful. Therefore it is full of all manner of evil desires, full of lusts. But your child does not fully understand lust. That is to say, your child does not consider that mere evil *lust* is accounted sin in the eyes of God. Nor does it properly understand for *what things* it should not lust. Then comes the Law of God and says: "Thou shalt not covet!" And the Law also tells your child *what all* it dare not lust for. It is altogether good and just that the Law says this, for the Law itself is holy, just, and good. But sin, which before has been dormant, in a measure, and dead, as it were, is awakened and quickened by this very command, and it works within your child all manner of concupiscence, or evil desire. Sin, which dwells within your child, takes occasion by the holy, just, and good Law and by what it commands and forbids finds cause in it, feels itself irritated by it, and works within your child all manner of concupiscence, stirs up within your child the desire to do just what the Law forbids it to do.—So it is. So it is not only in the case of your child, but of every one of us. So exceedingly sinful is sin that dwells within us.

There you have it. Now, I trust, you understand. By the *Law* alone, by commanding and forbidding alone, you can accomplish nothing good. Thereby you would not be making your child better, but worse. If you attempt by such means to keep your child away from wicked things, the only result will be that now your child will lust all the more after those things.

21) Rom. 7, 7. 8.

Now you will ask: *How*, then, are we to go about it to keep our child away from all these wicked things?

My answer is: Try to bring your child to the point where he *will of himself DESIRE to stay away from these things*, in spite of the desires that arise within his heart. Try to bring your child to the point where he will crucify his wicked flesh with its affections and lusts, *because he is Christ's.*²²⁾ Try to bring your child to the point where he will say to sin: Depart from me, I hate your presence; you would separate between me and my Savior, in whom alone I have life and grace and forgiveness. Bring your child to the point where he will say to Jesus: Unto Thee, my Savior, alone, will I live, to Thee will I be true, Thee will I serve, for Thy sake will I *abstain* from evil, in Thy service will I, if need be, suffer, and in Thy name will I die.—O Eunice, that is the only right way! There alone is the *Spirit of God.*²³⁾ And where the Spirit of God is, there is victory, there all must end well. What can all the power of hell avail if God's Spirit fights for you?

Do you still ask how you are to get your child *to that point*? Eunice, I have told you that long ago, and more than once, and even in this letter. There is but *one* means of bringing your child to the point where it will of itself *want* to stay away from these wicked things for the Savior's sake. It is this: "*The Spirit and the bride say, Come!*" It is the holy *Gospel*, worthy of all acceptation. By that alone does the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, approach your child and put the *Law* of God, and all the laws and commandments of God, into his mind, and write them into his heart.²⁴⁾ In this manner you must approach your child, with all diligence, and in all wisdom, and with all your power, and at the same time remind him of the Law of God. And then look up to the Good Shepherd, and commit your child to *Him*.

22) Gal. 5, 24; Rom. 6, 6; Col. 3, 5.

23) Rom. 8, 13—16.

24) Heb. 8, 10.

There are various other helps which you might and *should* employ, in order to keep your child away from the wicked things I mentioned. But I shall speak of them in my next letter, as this one has already grown too long. But I desire very much that you should ponder all this very carefully in your heart.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XX.

DEAR EUNICE:—

You and your husband do not want your child to read things that breathe unbelief and false doctrine, nor do you want your child's soul to be sullied in theater and dance-hall. You want your child to say: *I don't want these things.* And I have told you in my last letter that there is but one means by which you can bring your child to form this right and good resolution. That means is the *Gospel*. For if such a resolution is to be genuine and lasting, it must spring from *faith*. And faith is wrought and strengthened and sustained by the *Gospel* alone.

However, I have also said that there are a number of other *helps* which you can and should use along with the *Gospel*, in order to keep your child away from those wicked things that hurt its soul; and I said that in my next letter I would speak of those other helps. I will now do so. To the best of my ability, then, let me enumerate those other helps in due order.

1. Children of the age when they are growing to be young men and young women crave the society and friendship of others of the same age, with whom they may be glad and merry. This is altogether natural and quite right. You should gladly consent to it. You cannot forever keep such children locked up in the house, as in a prison. But take care that your child finds its associates and friends among those who belong to truly Christian families of your Church, who are sincere in their piety. In such company, you see, one burning coal, as it were, is added to another, and a fire

of cheer and gladness that is well-pleasing to God will be fanned into a flame.

2. I have said: "You cannot forever keep such children locked in the house, as in a prison." You certainly cannot. But there is something else you can do. You can make of your house a delightful home for your child, a home which it loves, so that it will be glad to be there, and have little desire to loaf around elsewhere.

How is that to be done? Now, Eunice, I believe you understand how to go about that better than I can explain.

If at home your child is always sure to meet with a kind and dear and provident and loving mother;

If the home is neat and bright and clean and cheerful and cozy, no matter whether you are rich or poor;

If at home your child can find for his spare hours some well-selected reading-matter, clean and interesting, and suited to its years;

If there is a variety of games in which he can engage with his brothers and sisters, and with his friends who come to visit him;

If there is music and singing at home (if your child is talented and so inclined, help him to learn to play the piano or the violin or some other instrument);

If — well, what more shall I say? — if your house is such a dear and delightful home, do you not think your child will be glad to be there? The home must be inviting. You cannot force such matters.

3. And yet, even so, you cannot forever keep your child at home. That would not even be desirable. Young people who forever stick about the house are not the right kind. Get your child out into the great out-of-doors.

When the birds begin to sing,
When the flowers say, 'Tis spring!
Then get out without delay,
Then get out and shout and play!
Come, fellows, get out!

Let your child roam about the fields and woods with his friends. If your child is a boy, let him play ball with the



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rest of them. Let your youngster tumble about with other playmates and be happy; let him get out where things are green, when the season is open, and out on the snow and ice in winter. What is it the Holy Spirit says? “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but *know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgment.*”¹⁾ Make your child familiar with this text. Tell him to be glad and merry. Let your child walk in the ways that seem good to his heart, and that are pleasant in the sight of his eyes. But give him warning lest he do anything wicked, lest God bring him into judgment for these things. And you must always be informed of your child’s whereabouts. Fix the time when you expect him to be home. Now and then the occasion will require your child to stay out later of an evening than usual, and if you know with whom he is staying and where, you may well make an exception. It won’t do to be too strict. But as a rule your child should be at home promptly at the appointed hour, and go to bed and to sleep. If young people don’t get enough sleep, it affects their work and their health and their entire character; they become drowsy and enervated and disinterested and lazy.

4. Eunice, inspire your child with an ambition to amount to something when he gets to be a man or woman.

Shall I explain?

If your child is a girl, read to her in some confidential hour what Solomon says of a virtuous woman. You will find it in the last chapter of Proverbs, beginning at verse ten. Of course, you will want to give heed so that your own behavior is a living example for your daughter of what such a virtuous woman is. If your daughter is with you at home all day, you will try to awaken in her a love for housework so she will do it with pleasure and with a will and with many a cheerful song. On the other hand, if your daughter is working elsewhere, and only at home in the evening, see that

1) Eccl. 11, 9.

she develops an ambition even then to become a virtuous woman. One evening I came into the house of some of my church-members, and they were just cutting up a pig for sausage and lard and ham and bacon and the like. It was a pleasure to see the father with his sleeves rolled up and with his wife's apron on. And the mother was just as busy. And the daughter who had come home from work,—what was she doing? Sitting in an easy-chair, rocking, and not bothering about anything. My, but I hated to see that! I said: "You have a lot of work here!" "Yes," said the mother, "and father must help, too. He has just come home from work." "And how about Louise?" said I. "Oh, when she gets home from the office, she doesn't want to be bothered with anything," answered the mother, and laughed. But the father did not laugh. His face was very serious. Such a situation is not good, Eunice. Louise should have lent a hand, and that right cheerfully and eagerly, and her mother should have urged her to do so. I could not see how Louise could ever develop into a "virtuous woman" in that way. She soon left the house, too, and went, I know not where. I wondered if the parents knew.

And if your child is a boy, then, too, you must try to make him want to be of help about the house. There is all kinds of work to do. Your son should consider your house *his dear home*, and should take an interest in it, and have an ambition to be of assistance, without being driven. He ought to have that disposition, if he is to become a man of good character.

This, too, will help in keeping your child from wicked things, and in making him *want* to keep away from them.

I will not mention any more such helps. You, without doubt, know of still others.

But there is another thing which I will mention and must mention. It is not a pleasant thing to speak of. It is this. If in spite of all your best and persistent efforts your child will do those wicked things which I mentioned in the beginning of this letter and in the foregoing one, if it simply persists in being disobedient and disrespectful and stubborn

— may God by His mercy prevent that, but if it does come to that — *then you simply dare not tolerate it.*

I know of families in my congregation where they had such a child. The parents were helpless. That young son of theirs simply did whatever he liked. And what did the parents do? They scolded, they admonished, they begged, they wept, but it did no good, and — they tolerated the condition. They continued to feed and house and clothe their disobedient boy. And the boy went wherever he cared to and returned whenever he liked. And what became of him? I have seen the results more than once, but I don't like to describe them.

I say: *Such disobedience you dare not tolerate.*

But what are parents to *do* when it has come to such a pass?

That is, indeed, a difficult question, and fairly breaks a parent's heart.

If Christian parents continue to house and feed their child in spite of such manifest disobedience and wickedness, they house and feed that disobedience and wickedness itself, and they house and feed a bad example for their other children, if they have any others, and at all events they house and feed a bad example for other children of the congregation. Is it not so?

Yes, indeed. But what are they to *do*?

Without ceasing they should *pray* to the Good Shepherd for their child.

Yes, most assuredly! But this their prayer is known only to the Good Shepherd. Meanwhile, dare they simply continue to house and feed that disobedience and wickedness, and that bad and harmful example?

No, they dare not.

What, then, are they to *do*?

Since their child despises the inviting voice of the Gospel, they must employ the threatening and punishing *Law of God.* That is given for the disobedient.²⁾

2) 1 Tim. 1, 9.

But how are they to use the threatening and punishing Law? Why, just by threatening and punishing.³⁾

But what if their disobedient child has grown to such an age that he scoffs at all threats, and the parents can no longer use the rod? What then? What are the parents, then, to do?

Well, I will tell you what *I* would do in such a case, by the grace of God.

I would say to that disobedient child: Hereafter you will only get bread and water in this house and nothing more, until you obey. And furthermore I would say: I cannot convert you; God only can do that; but I will not tolerate disobedience; so, hereafter there is only bread and water for you. And I would insist that it receive nothing but bread and water. It would not starve with that.

If parents do that, one of two things would result.

Either the child would obey. That would not imply that all is well, for such obedience is merely compulsory and unwilling. But there would be an end to that bad example. And the parents would have an opportunity for further efforts in behalf of their child.

Or the child would run away. Then the parents have lost their child — lost him out of their sight. In truth they have lost him long ago. The Good Shepherd then has *not* lost him out of His sight. And to Him let the parents commend their child. They must not run after their run-away child, and try to bring him home. For then their child would only return on one condition, the condition that he would have freedom to do as he always did, to do whatever he pleases, and to be housed and fed at the same time. In fact, things would then be worse than before. Parents then have utterly lost all power over their child. They would then be on the defensive, and would scarcely dare to say a word. — As for the run-away child, for a little while he will feel free, free of all restraints. But his happiness would be of short duration. He is still so young! In most cases he would have a hard

3) Prov. 13, 24; 19, 18. 19; 22, 15; 23, 13. 14; 29, 15. 17.

time of it. And then he would think back of home. And then he will come back and promise to obey. Then the parents should take him back. You cannot say that then the child is actually penitent and converted. But the parents again have him where he hears the Word of God. And their child is richer by one experience. Perhaps ere long he will return like the prodigal son.⁴⁾ And then, then there is joy in heaven and on earth.

May God the Lord cause His face to shine upon your house, and be gracious unto you, dear Eunice!

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XXI.

DEAR EUNICE:—

My letters are drawing to a close. For now the time is approaching when your son thinks of looking about for a bride, and of starting a home of his own, or your daughter thinks of marrying some young man. The fledgling is beginning to bestir himself, and is chirping and cooing and responding, and wants to build a nest for himself.

How shall your son find a good wife or your daughter a good husband?

Certainly this, too, is a matter that should be begun with prayer. Of all times and conditions surely in wedlock the blessing of God is most needed and desired. So let the first preparation be prayer, and God will so arrange it that true Christians will be joined in loving union for a peaceful life.

Having said this at the outset, however, I will now first show the wrong and harmful and disastrous way of entering into married life, in order that if then I show the right and advantageous and salutary way, it will stand out so much brighter and more inviting against the dark background.

“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they

4) Luke 15.

were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh." 1) Surely you are acquainted with this Word of God. But do you also know what teaching it involves for all times? May I tell you? When the "sons of God," when Christian and believing young men, who have received a Christian training, look upon the "daughters of men," upon ungodly and unbelieving girls, who have not received a Christian training, but have been raised in worldly-minded families, and marry them, because perhaps they are pretty or wealthy, or because of some other attraction, then these young men strive with the Spirit of God, and refuse to be guided and ruled by Him, but follow merely the lust of their flesh and of their eyes. And if Christian and believing young women, who have received a Christian training, cast longing eyes upon ungodly and unbelieving young men, who have not received a Christian training, and marry them, the situation is the same. And these things are not pleasing to God. He does not bless such things. He punishes such behavior.

Oh, the misfortune, the misery, and the grief I have lived to see in families that were started in this ungodly way! Everything bad imaginable, in fact. I will relate but a few instances.

The unbelieving *wife* soon began to reveal her true mind. She would gad about while the husband was at work; when he came home, he would find the house disorderly and dinner not ready; there would be discontent and quarrels; when dinner was scarcely over, the wife would want to go to some show or dance; if the husband would not go, she would go with some one else; as for children, she did not want any, or perhaps one, and positively not more than two; if the man scolded, the wife cried and threatened to sue for a divorce; for a time she would actually run off and stay with her parents. Never was the Word of God heard in their home; gradually the man, too, became indifferent toward

1) Gen. 6, 1—3.

the Word of God. The children born to them received a heathen training. The husband would curse his wife, and call himself a fool for having married her; she would promptly reply in like manner. All was unrest and godlessness in that house. In many cases such an unhappy union ends in divorce.

The unbelieving *husband*, too, will soon show his true character. I was one day called to a house in which the wife was a member of my church. I was to baptize the first baby. During the ceremony the husband sat in an adjoining room, the door of which was open, and loudly whistled some rag-time tune. Frequently, very frequently, chaste young women of my congregation became infected with venereal diseases which their husbands had contracted in their previous co-habitation with harlots, and they had to submit to surgical operations. During their illness the men would go back to the harlots, and how would the story go on?! In many instances the wives, too, would become indifferent and fall away from the Church and from the Word of God. The children were not permitted to attend the church-school. There was no trace of the Word of God at home. Then again, in some cases, the wife would remain true to the Church and the Word of God, but she would weep, often secretly, sometimes even openly, for she was unhappy.

Eunice, what I have just told you is nothing but what I have repeatedly observed with my own eyes. And I could tell still sadder things.

Oh, I know, I know quite well, that sometimes, to all *appearances*, there is peace and happiness even in such families. But is that peace and happiness of the *right* kind? And there are instances where the Christian husband prevails upon the unchristian wife, or the Christian wife prevails upon the unchristian husband, to hear the Word of God and to embrace his Savior in true faith. But will it do for your son or your daughter to count on such an eventuality? By no means! 2)

Let me tell you still another thing, Eunice, which you may read to your son or daughter, even as you may do with all I have just written.— When a young man becomes *infatuated* with a girl, or a young woman with a young man, it is by no means certain that this is true and enduring *love*. Of course, such young people think so, and it is very difficult to make them see things as they truly are. But the fact of the matter is that infatuation is exactly what is spoken of in the text which I quoted above:³⁾ young people see, and even look for, what pleases their eyes, and they crave it and insist on having it. *Infatuation* is a passionate condition of the flesh and of the senses which soon disappears. The poet Schiller is surely right when in his *Lay of the Bell* he says:

Who binds himself forever, he
Should prove if heart to heart agree!
The dream is short, repentance long.
Through the bride's fair locks, so dear,
Twines the virgin chaplet bright,
When the church-bells, ringing clear,
To the joyous feast invite.
Ah! life's happiest festival
Needs must end life's happy May;
With the veil and girdle all
Those sweet visions fade away.
Though passion must fly,
Yet love must remain;
Though the flow'ret may die,
Yet the fruit scents the plain.

Yes, indeed, the *passion* soon flies. *Love* must remain. Now, if your child mistakes the passion of infatuation for true love, and marries on the strength of that, what will be left in a short time? Nothing at all. O yes, something after all: long *regret*, after the short-lived *delusion* has vanished.

Who binds himself forever, he
Should prove if heart to heart agree!

Yes, say the young people; this is what we want to do. And what do they do? They "go together," as the saying is.

3) Gen. 6, 1—3.

You know what that means, Eunice. But nevertheless I want to illustrate this by telling you of two cases that came to my notice. Of course, I have seen very much of that. But I will speak of only two cases, which will make clear to you what I wish to say.

1. A young man of my congregation for a long time "went with" a very nice and good and pretty girl of my congregation. Everybody thought, and I, too, did not doubt in the least, that they would get married. And everybody was glad, and so was I, especially for the young man's sake, because he would get such a good and dear wife. Suddenly there was an end to the courtship. The young man had met another girl, who belonged to a sectarian church, had fallen in love with her, "went with her," after a short time was engaged to her, and married her. On being reproached for the way he had deserted that other girl, he said that he had not been engaged to her, that he had only "gone with her." The poor girl almost died of a broken heart.

2. In the same way another couple of my congregation "went together." Both had an excellent reputation, and were steady and faithful in their attendance at church. Finally the young man desired to become engaged to the girl and get married soon. But the girl and her parents said *no*. The young man became so downhearted that he never married at all.

I want to tell you what I think of this "going together," Eunice.— Two young people who go together want to find out whether they would be properly suited to each other. So far, so good. But that is not the right way to find that out. When the two go together after this fashion, the girl surely thinks the young man wants to marry her, and the young man thinks that the girl will be willing to be married to him. And as far as the girl is concerned, other young men stay away from her, thinking that she belongs to this young man. And he would resent it very much if another tried to win her. If then he suddenly stops keeping company with this girl, she is entirely deserted; people even begin to suspect that there is something about the girl that

is not as it should be, otherwise the young man would not have deserted her.

Matrimony is a lifelong and most intimate union between man and wife. Man and wife are *one* flesh. Their children belong to both alike. Man and wife share *one* house, *one* table, *one* bed. Fortune and misfortune affect both in like manner. Joy and sadness cannot come to one alone: each is affected by the joy or sadness of the other. They have a joint interest in everything. "What is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine," they say, and that should be the motto of both. And so husband and wife should be of *one* heart and of *one* soul. And in truth, therefore, husband and wife should have *ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE Baptism, ONE God and Father* of both of them, who is above both, and through both, and in both.⁴⁾ Spiritually husband and wife should be *one* body and *one* spirit, and should live in *one* hope of their calling, in which both are called and converted.⁵⁾ Indeed, if this is *not* the case with both of them, how then is it possible for them actually and truly and rightly and properly and peacefully and joyfully to live in that most intimate and lifelong union which marriage implies? If this is *not* the case with husband and wife, what, then, will become of the children, who certainly belong to both alike? Whom will they follow?

Therefore, Eunice, it ought to be a foregone conclusion for your son or for your daughter not to enter matrimony with one who does not belong to church, or who belongs to a church of a wrong faith.—In many cases such a person will promise and say: "I will take instruction in the Lutheran doctrine and join the church." But two things should be considered. In the first place, experience teaches that such promises are rarely kept. In the second place, since the promise is given only with the view of marrying your son or your daughter, there is great danger that, though the person keeps the promise, yet he or she will be but a very indifferent sort of Lutheran church-member. And yet, by

4) Eph. 4, 5. 6.

5) v. 4.

the grace of God it may all turn out otherwise. I have known men and women who became Lutherans originally only to obtain the coveted marriage consent, but who turned out to be most excellent Christians and members of the Lutheran Church. But now listen, Eunice! Advise your son or your daughter under no condition to consider matrimony with a person who belongs to no church or to a church of a wrong faith, unless that person *first* takes instruction and joins the Lutheran Church and proves himself — or herself, as the case may be — a faithful Lutheran Christian. *Then* may follow:

Who binds himself forever, he
Should prove if heart to heart agree!

And eventually engagement and marriage may follow.

This may suffice for to-day. Next time the advantageous and salutary way of entering wedlock shall appear in its brightness.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XXII.

DEAR EUNICE: —

How shall your son find a good wife, or how shall your daughter find a good husband? That is the subject of to-day's letter. In the third paragraph of my last letter I have already briefly given the answer to this question. Let us go into more detail to-day.

To be exact, we might have framed the question so as to enquire what *you* can do to accomplish this end, for it is to *you* that I am writing.

Well, as for choosing and deciding upon a wife for your son, or a husband for your daughter, that is not in your power, nor in the power of your husband. The Bible, it is true, tells of Abraham who commanded Eliezer, his steward, with the help of God to seek and to take a wife unto his son Isaac.¹⁾ And it tells how Eliezer did this, prayerfully.²⁾ And it further tells that Bethuel, Rebekah's father, merely

1) Gen. 24, 1—9.

2) vv. 10—17.

said to Eliezer: "Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken" (as the Lord had so plainly indicated).³⁾ But Rebekah also gave her free consent.⁴⁾ And Isaac, too, was fully satisfied.⁵⁾ However, you and your husband cannot imitate what Abraham and Bethuel did. You have no word of the Lord to do so, no command and no promise. Your son himself will have to choose for himself a wife, and your daughter herself must give her consent freely and without constraint, when some man asks her to become his wife.

Let me tell you a story that illustrates this. — There was once in one of the congregations of our Synod a family that served God and was acceptable to God and approved of men.⁶⁾ They had a grown-up daughter who was a dear and a good girl. In a neighboring congregation there was a young man whose reputation was particularly good, and this girl's parents thought a great deal of him. And he came to them very properly, and inquired whether they would permit him to ask their daughter to become his wife. They gladly consented. And now he approached the girl and asked her to become his wife. She refused; and sadly he reported this to her parents. Thereupon they had an earnest talk with the daughter, and begged her to consider what a Christian and decent young man this was, and especially the mother tried hard to persuade her to give her consent. The girl wept and said she simply could not love that man and marry him. At this point the parents should have desisted. But they did not let the matter rest. They went to their pastor, and asked him to persuade their daughter to marry the young man. The pastor called the girl to his house, and did his utmost to persuade her. But the girl remained firm in the answer she had already given. Then the pastor did something that was not right. Pastors, too, make mistakes, Eunice. This particular pastor, by the way, soon accepted a call to another congregation, and there was deposed, for it had become evi-

3) v. 51.

5) vv. 66. 67.

4) v. 58.

6) Rom. 14, 18.

dent that he was dishonest. Well, what did this pastor do? He spoke at great length, and told the girl she would *have* to marry that man, because her parents wanted it; he said the Fourth Commandment required this; he said, if she was disobedient, she was not a Christian, and could not be saved. The poor girl was frightened, and went home crying. The pastor thought he had won his case. He went to the parents and told them to let the young man come the next day, and he himself would be present, and the girl would without doubt give her consent. So on the next day they were all together. The young man again asked the girl to marry him. The parents urged her. The pastor preached heaven and hell to her. The girl was weeping hard, and tremblingly and despairingly she faintly said, Yes. Now the young man stepped up to her to seal the engagement with a kiss, but the girl cried out in terror, and ran away, ran out of the house and took a train to some relatives that lived far away. — Now that church got another pastor. The former pastor required of his successor, and the young man likewise required of him, to compel the girl to marry him. In case she still refused, so they demanded, this pastor was to excommunicate her as being an adulteress, having broken her engagement, to which she had given her consent in the presence of witnesses. By engagement, they urged, one enters upon holy wedlock. The girl also wrote a letter to this new pastor, in which she told the whole story, and stated that her consent was forced and given in desperation. She appealed to him most pathetically to save her. Being an utter stranger to this affair, the new pastor now got the parents and also the young man to tell him everything, and he convinced them that *this* was not a proper engagement, there having been no free-will consent, and he prevailed upon them to let the girl alone. Thereupon he wrote the girl to be at ease, and come home at once. She did so, and was happy. Later on she became the happy spouse of another man, and a true Eunice.

As for you, Eunice, no doubt you now see clearly that parents must beware of bringing undue pressure, not to say force, to bear upon their child, to enter upon a given mar-

riage. *That* is not the way to apply the Fourth Commandment. That is using the name of God in vain. Engagement and matrimony must be a matter of free and unconstrained consent. It is proper and right that parents should give good advice and warn against mistakes. And it is proper and right that parents should refuse to give their consent and their blessing when their child is about to enter upon an alliance which is altogether wrong in the sight of God. But beyond this parents dare not go. They must not compel their child to enter upon a marriage which they, the parents, consider good and desirable.

This story with its application has been quite long, though I trust you did not find it tedious. I will now return to my first question: What can *you* do, so your son will find a good wife, and your daughter will find a good husband?

The first thing must be that from the beginning, from your child's infancy and throughout all its years, you do your utmost to keep your child from associating and becoming intimate with children and young people of families that are irreligious, or have a wrong faith, and get it to find its friends and associates among those who not only belong to your church, to be sure, but also are sincerely upright and God-fearing.

But how are you to do this? All I can say is this: Cultivate connections and associations and friendships with good families of your church. And this: Get your child to join the Young People's Societies, choirs, and Bible classes of your church. There the young people get acquainted with each other, and, by the grace of God, one heart finds another.

And, too, Eunice, try to get your child to see what a sad thing a mismated marriage is—I have shown that in my last letter—and what a delightful thing marriage is when it is well-pleasing to God. This I wish to show to-day.

And then *pray*, Eunice; pray that your child may find a suitable spouse, and try to get your child to *pray* for this too, sincerely. Such prayer is well-pleasing to God, and He certainly hears it and grants it.

Yes, do this, Eunice: Picture to your child what a de-

lightful thing marriage is when it is well-pleasing to God. I will very briefly sketch this now.

The wife is a true *helpmeet* to her husband.⁷⁾ The heart of her husband doth safely trust her. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.⁸⁾ She prepares for him a sweet and cozy home. She husbands his goods; she is not extravagant nor wasteful; but she stretches out her hand to the poor and needy.⁹⁾ She cares for his body. She cares also for his soul, and she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness.¹⁰⁾ Many a time a man is greatly in need of this and is highly benefited. She, who herself is neat and diligent¹¹⁾ and God-fearing,¹²⁾ also trains her children to be neat and diligent and God-fearing. Blessed indeed is the man that finds a virtuous woman; her price is far above rubies.¹³⁾ She is a true Eunice, and there is no falsehood in her. And do you know the meaning of the name Eunice? It means Good Victory. She conquers all evil and every heartache, and all fear and every dread that arises in the home.

And the man leaves his father and his mother, and cleaves unto his wife.¹⁴⁾ His wife is nearest and dearest and best to him, above all earthly possessions. His heart cleaves unto his wife as it cleaves unto no other thing on earth. He works for his wife, he cares for his wife, he protects his wife, he honors his wife, he comforts his wife in every grief and sorrow,¹⁵⁾ he governs and directs and guides his wife according to the Word of God with a loving hand;¹⁶⁾ it is a joy and a pleasure for him to cheer his wife and make her glad, for he sees every day that her sole aim is to make him and her children glad, never thinking of herself and of her own pleasure. Such a delightful thing is matrimony when it is well-pleasing to God, when man and wife are joined in the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the fear of God.

7) Gen. 2, 18.

8) Prov. 31, 11. 12.

9) vv. 13—22. 27.

10) v. 26.

11) v. 25.

12) v. 30.

13) v. 10.

14) Gen. 2, 24.

15) 1 Sam. 1, 8.

16) 1 Pet. 3, 6. 7; Eph. 5, 24. 25; Col. 3, 18. 19.

“Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, and peace upon Israel.”¹⁷⁾

And what of *love*, what of love in such a state of matrimony? Love there is just the reverse of that love which is nothing but a stormy passion of infatuation, or a mere carnal, worldly passion. Such passion flies, yea, it flies away in every-day wedded life.

With the veil and girdle all
Those sweet visions fade away.

But the love that obtains in such a God-pleasing state of matrimony, such love is grounded upon God, it is in Jesus Christ, it is wrought by the Holy Spirit; it grows and increases and waxes ever greater and stronger as time goes on. Isaac brought Rebekah, whom the Lord had given unto him to be his wife, and whom he had not known until then, into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he loved her.¹⁸⁾ This mutual love between husband and wife is strong as death; the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it.¹⁹⁾

Eunice, do you think I have been extravagant in my praise of this love? Do you think I am not presenting the matter as it actually is? — Mark what I shall now say.

Knowing myself as I do, and remembering my former state of wedlock with my beloved wife, who is now long since departed and present with the Lord, and whose price was far above rubies, — being mindful, I say, of all this, there is one thing I know very well. What is that? I know that sin, which is inherent in all of us, frequently casts its black shadows on even the happiest union, and clouds and obscures

17) Ps. 128.

18) Gen. 24, 67.

19) Song of Sol. 8, 6. 7.

the love that makes the man and his wife happy. This is so especially in the first months of married life—one should not think so, since this time is called the honeymoon; it is just then that displeasures and disputes arise between man and wife. Just consider that man and wife come from different families, and have different views and customs and habits with respect to many a little thing. And now of a sudden they live together in the most intimate and indissoluble of ties. And so occasions arise when they do not agree, when there is discord, when the harmony is faulty, when one is grieved or offended at the other. And not always do they control and subdue their ugly Old Adam as they should. We poor sinners frequently fail to do this even in later life, when we—meaning man and wife—certainly have accustomed ourselves to each other. O yes, so it is, just because of sin that dwells within us. “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”²⁰⁾ But right here is the proof that the love which obtains in such a state of matrimony is grounded upon God, is in Jesus Christ, is wrought by the Holy Spirit, is strong as death, that the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord, that many waters cannot quench it, neither the floods drown it:—very soon it shines forth again in its first splendor and drives away the black shadows; displeasures and disputes soon disappear, discords are removed, all again is the best of harmony, and neither is grieved or offended in the other any more.

And do you know the *means*, a most precious means, to restore this sweet harmony of love? *Joint devotion in the evening*, the Word of God, that fire, that hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.²¹⁾ This burns away the weeds of sin, this shatters the hard shell and crust which sin lays about the heart in an effort not to let out the love which

20) Rom. 7, 18—20.

21) Jer. 23, 29.

after all dwells therein. And do you know *who*, as a rule, restores the harmony? The *wife*. Usually it is the wife who first comes and offers her hand and offers her lips for a kiss. Ah, here again I, a poor sinner, am reminded of something. And since I am writing very confidentially to you, I will tell you. Very early, while we were yet engaged, my sweetheart and I had had a little quarrel. And now it was evening and time to go to bed. There came my sweetheart, carrying a lamp and ready to go to her chamber. And she stood before me and said softly: "Forgive me!" (though I was really the guilty one) and offered to kiss me. And I—I would not. But she remained standing and pleading. Indeed, then everything was cleared up.

Eunice, you may read this letter to your child who is now about to enter upon the estate of matrimony. There are some things in it that may be of help so your son may find a good wife, or your daughter may find a good husband.

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

XXIII.

DEAR EUNICE:—

This is my last letter to you. For to-day I will speak of the very last thing your child does while it is still with you. I will speak of its *engagement* to be married.

Engagement, betrothal, is the promise of marriage.

Whenever a respectable and honorable man gives his promise to another, he will do his utmost to keep that promise. And the greater and more important the matter is which he has promised, the more determined will he be to keep his promise. If he were not so minded, he would not be an honorable and respectable man. Now there certainly is not a greater and a more important matter for this earthly life than *matrimony*. Hence, if a man promises a woman to marry her, or if a woman promises a man to marry him, and then says: O well, I have changed my mind!— then there is no trace of decency or honor.

However, I am not now speaking of merely respectable and honorable people, but of people who are far more than respectable and honorable, of true Christians, who fear, love, and trust in God above all things, because they are God's dear children through Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior. When two such people have solemnly and properly entered upon rightful betrothal, then there must be no suggestion of a change of mind. The mind must be carefully made up beforehand, not afterward.

What constitutes proper and rightful betrothal?

Let me give an illustration that will make it very plain.

Let us say there is a Christian young man named Christian, who has upon due deliberation and serious reflection resolved to ask a girl to become his wife. We will call her Renata, for she is a girl who is truly born again, as her name implies. Christian first tells his own parents about it and asks their consent. They give it. Then Christian goes to Renata's parents and asks them to give him their daughter. They consent to do so. Now he approaches Renata and asks her to become his wife. Renata knows Christian and gives her consent. Now Christian and Renata pledge each other their troth in the presence of witnesses, perchance in the presence of their parents; and they bless them.—In speaking of the parents of both, I presume, of course, that they are still living. If only the father or only the mother is living, this pertains to him or to her. If both parents are dead, naturally they can't be consulted.—This is a proper and a rightful betrothal or engagement. *In such a betrothal God, the Lord, places His hand upon Christian and Renata and says: Christian, I have given Renata to be thy wife; Renata, I have given Christian to be thy husband.*

Indeed, God does this as soon as they are betrothed. Or when would you think He does this? During the marriage ceremony? The marriage ceremony is a very good and wholesome institution, and such a ceremony is necessary for the sake of the state and society. As far as Scriptural obligation is concerned, the marriage ceremony is about on a par with saying grace at table or with confirmation.—Or shall

God say this when they begin to live together? To live together and become one flesh is the privilege which God gives to those who have first been duly betrothed. Of course, there may be a case where man and wife are married and live together immediately after betrothal, why not? But it is in *betrothal* and by means of *betrothal* that God joins man and woman together. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."¹⁾ After the couple have plighted their troth, neither dare leave the other.— Mary, the mother of Jesus, was merely "espoused," that is to say, betrothed, to Joseph. Joseph had not yet taken her unto himself. And still, in Scripture Mary is called the "wife" of Joseph, and Joseph is called her "husband."²⁾ Accordingly, in the law of Moses a damsel that is "betrothed" unto a man is called his "wife," and in case she became unchaste, she was punished like an adulterous wife.³⁾

All these things concerning betrothal you ought to explain well to your child, so he will not commit a folly. You know that the world nowadays, and many a Christian, too, thinks very lightly and loosely of engagement.

But you must also warn your child not to commit folly in another respect. For I know, and no doubt you know, that when the time comes for the marriage ceremony, many a bride is not duly entitled to the veil and wreath, the symbols of virgin purity. Very frequently, indeed, those who are engaged enter upon the full privileges of married life, and become one flesh, before the marriage ceremony. And just when they have learned by such instruction as I have given here that in betrothal they become man and wife in the sight of God, they may fall into the temptation to avail themselves of the privileges of wedlock before the marriage ceremony. Warn your child!

But how shall you warn it?

Let me tell you.

Among Christians it is a well-established order and a cus-

1) Matt. 19, 6.

3) Deut. 22, 22—24.

2) Matt. 1, 18—20.

tom acknowledged and approved by all that those who have been betrothed to each other should first be joined together in a Christian ceremony, and there implore the blessing of God, before they live together and become one flesh. If any cohabit *beforehand*, then they break a good custom and order which they themselves must acknowledge, and do so merely because of their unruly carnal passions. Furthermore, they pretend in a hypocritical way *not* to have done it. This certainly is not Christian behavior. If their offense becomes manifest, say, if a child is born too soon after marriage, then they are disgraced; then they become the talk of the community; then evil things are said of them; then their parents are grieved; then their state of wedlock, which should be holy, clean, and blissful,⁴⁾ is at once clouded and embittered. In this way, too, they become a scandal to the world and to the Christian congregation; they set a bad example. In some proper manner the offense which they have given must be done away with. Now if they are true Christians, they will be ready to do this. And if their pastor is a wise man, possessed of a truly evangelical spirit, he will take care of the matter at the proper time and in the proper place with few and kind and proper words. But — all this certainly is not agreeable and pleasant. Let the young people contain themselves until they are duly and publicly married. Surely the young man should hold his bride in such love and esteem as not to want to cause her any pangs of conscience and any disgrace through his incontinence. And he himself will certainly not want to be disgraced and have a bad conscience. And surely the young bride should think enough of her own good conscience and of her honor! — Warn your child in this manner, Eunice.

And don't postpone marriage too long, especially if the two live in the same locality and see each other daily. The temptation may grow too strong. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."⁵⁾ Why not let them marry soon? I think very little of a long period of engagement. That is

4) Prov. 5, 18. 19.

5) Matt. 26, 41.

neither fish nor fowl, as the saying is. They belong to each other, and still they do not.

The marriage festivities should be cheerful and yet decent and honorable. Unseemly jests and foolery should be barred, and those stupid pranks which so frequently prove very annoying.

And—I have often found that it is not a good thing for the young married couple to live with the parents of the groom or of the bride. There is so much occasion for differences. However, these things I will merely state without going into detail. Let them build their own nest; let them paddle their own canoe.

Now, my dear Eunice, you may soon be grandmother, and then you may hand down these letters to your daughter or daughter-in-law.

May the Spirit of God rest upon you!

YOUR OLD FRIEND.

